Imperfect Girl

3

Story by **NISIOISIN**
Retold by **Mitsuru Hattori**

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NISIOISIN
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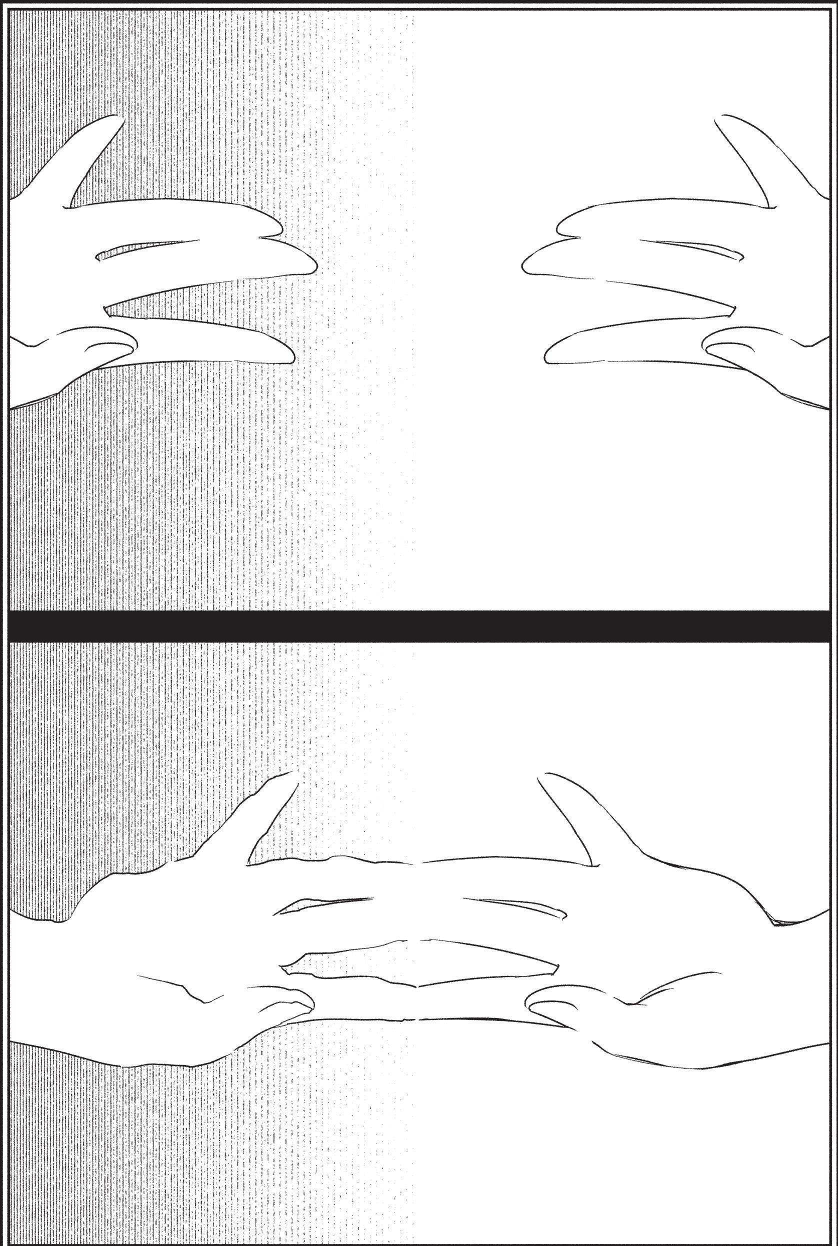
Original Character
Concept:
Foo Midori

Ten years ago.
I was a college student at the time,
and I had been kidnapped
and imprisoned by U,
a young girl in elementary school.

As I lived with her as a prisoner,
I caught glimpses of her day-to-day life.
And as I shared meals with her,
I realized something.
There were rules controlling this girl...

I was nothing more than
an aspiring author then,
but this was the incident that
caused me to become an author.



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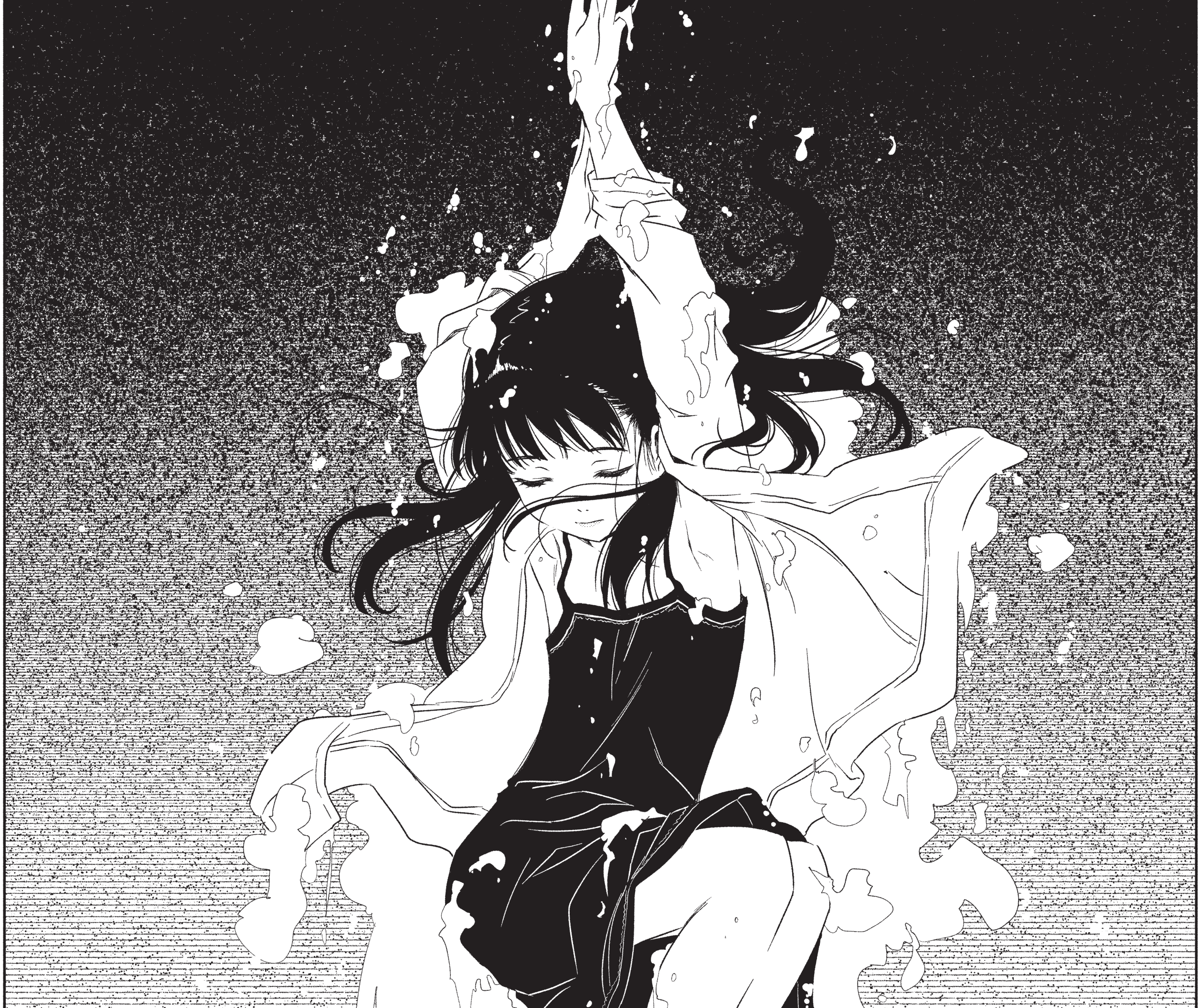
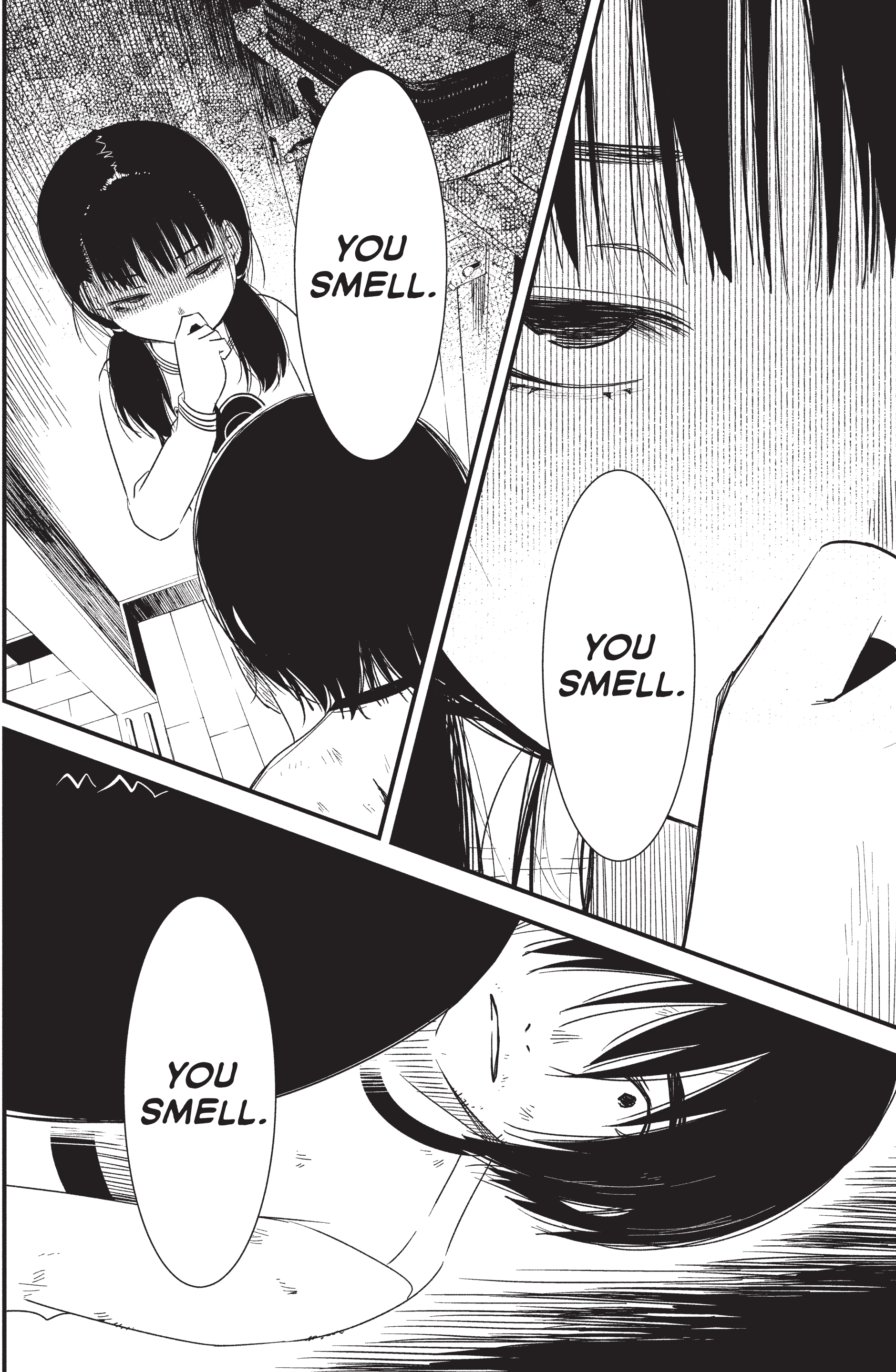
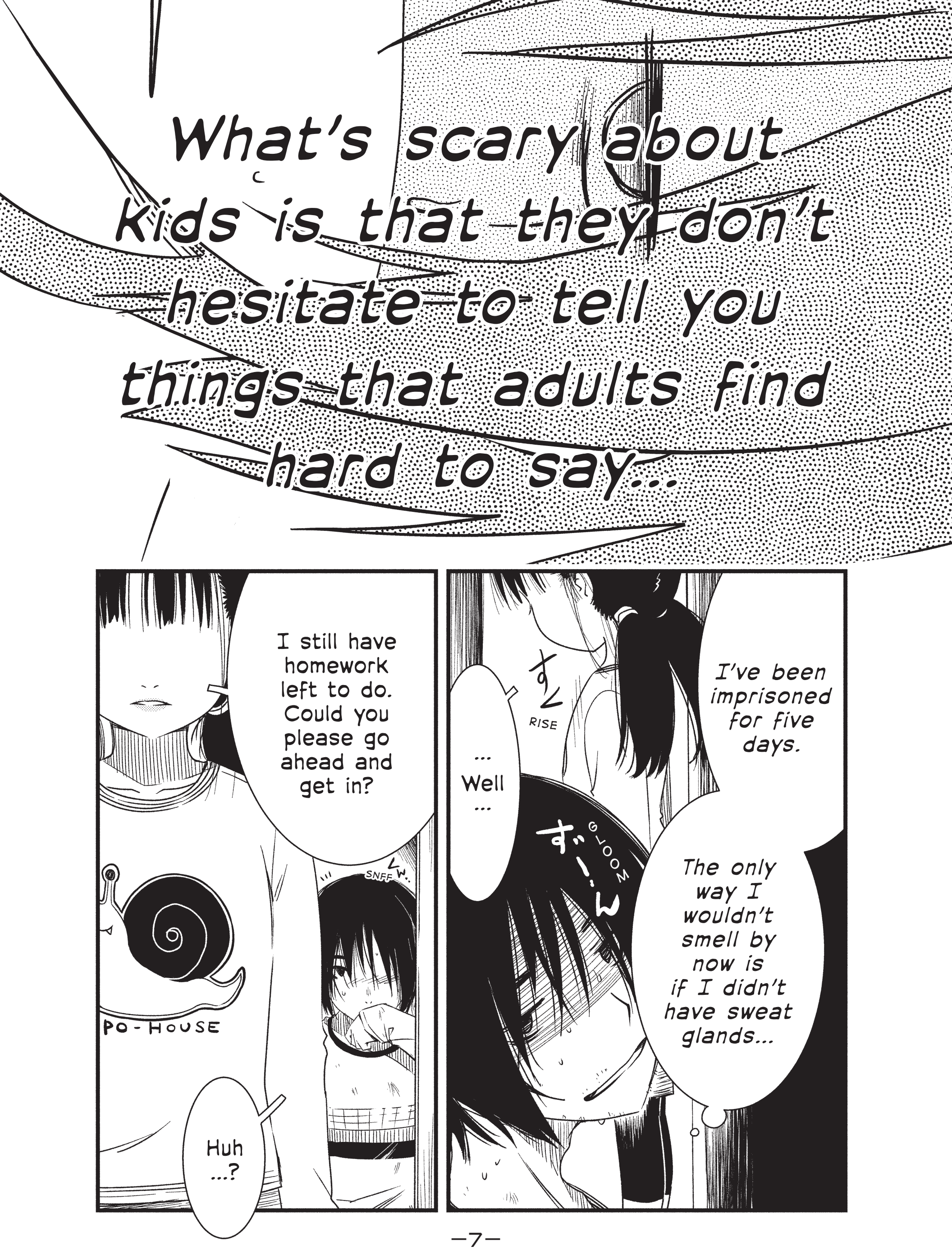
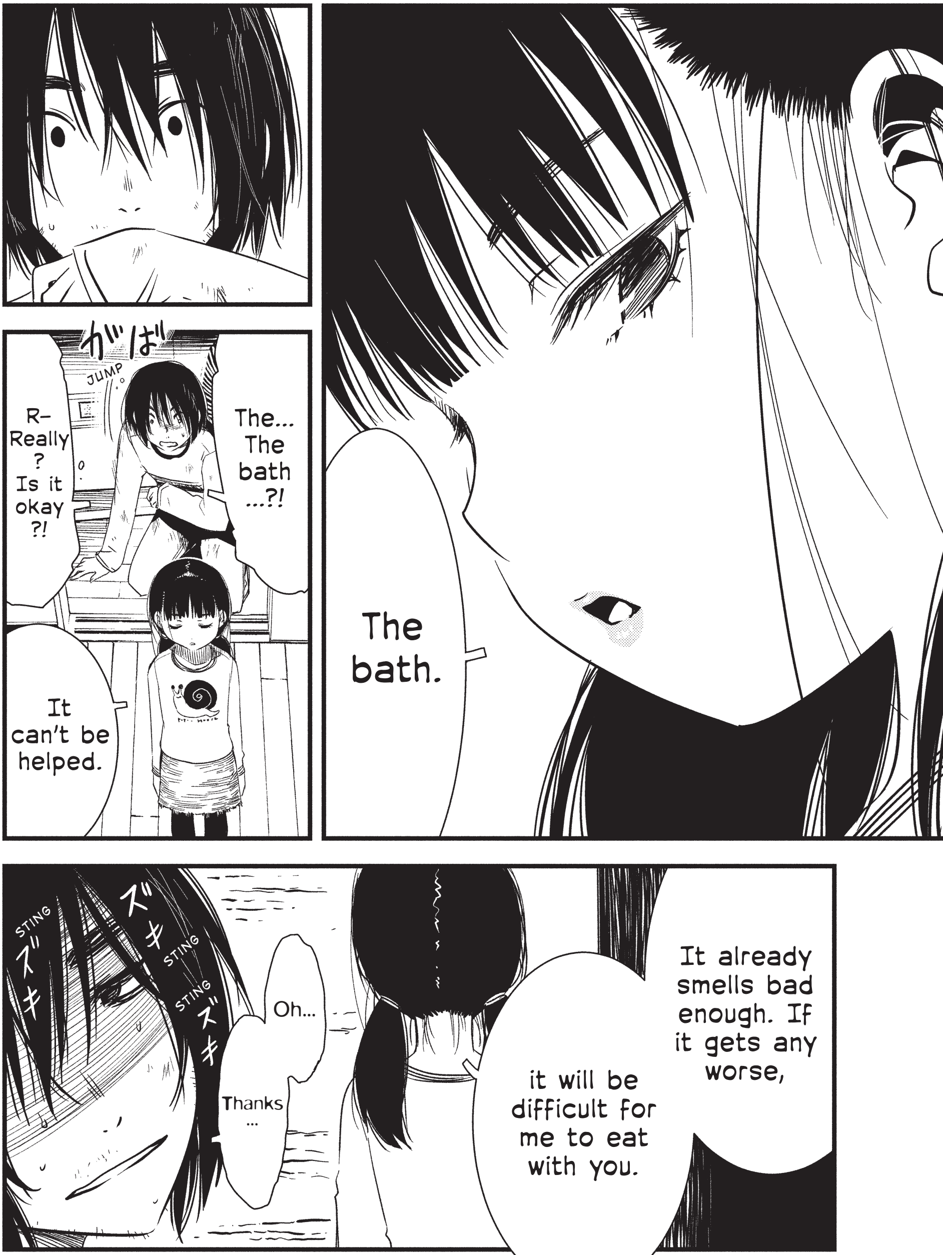
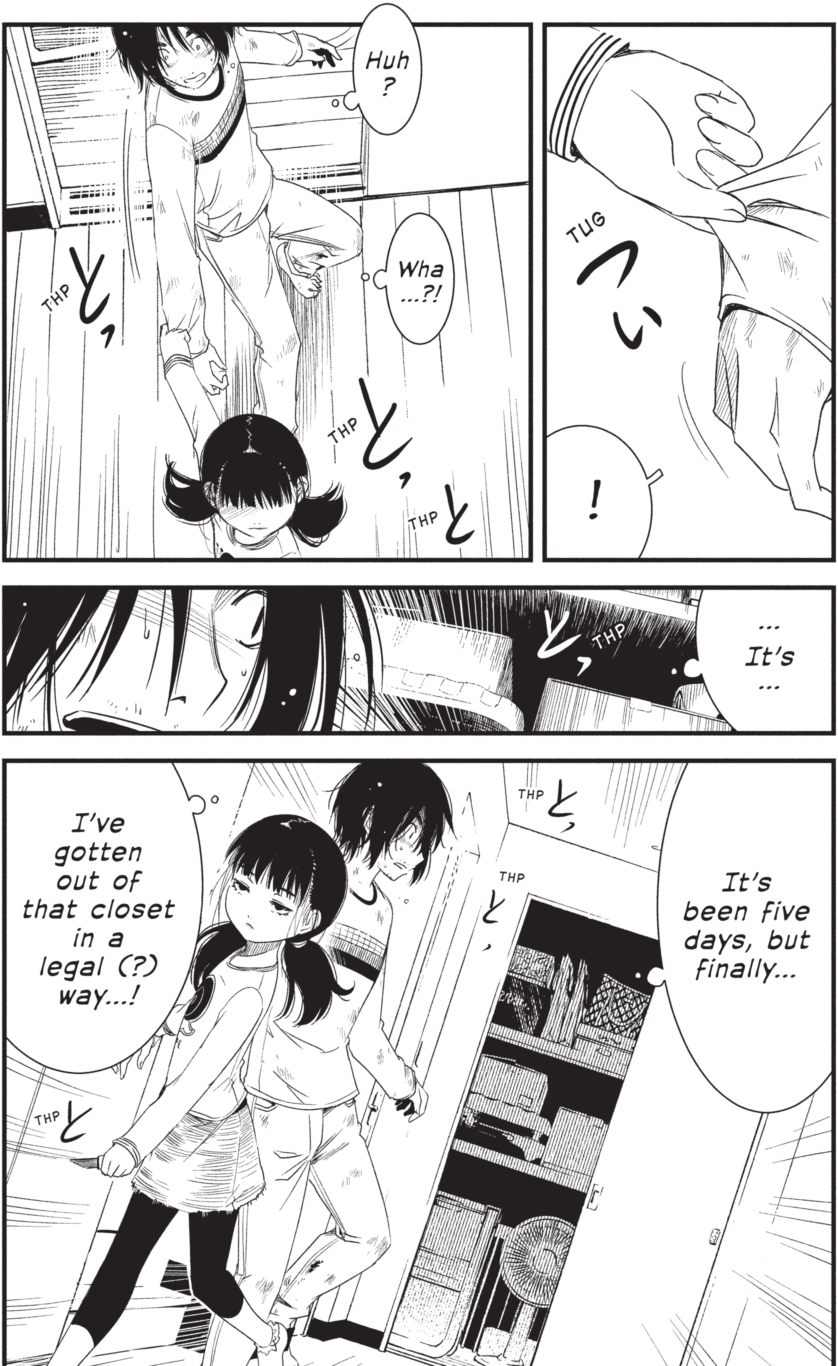
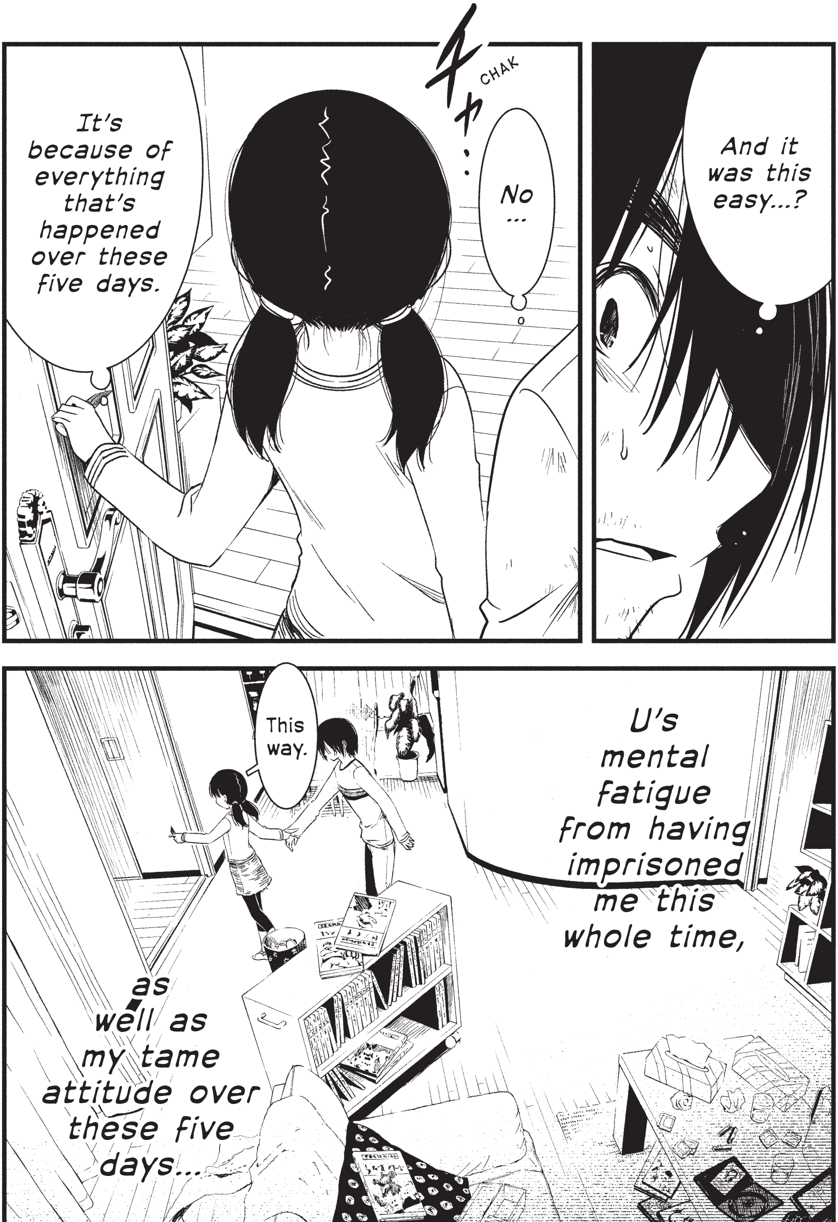


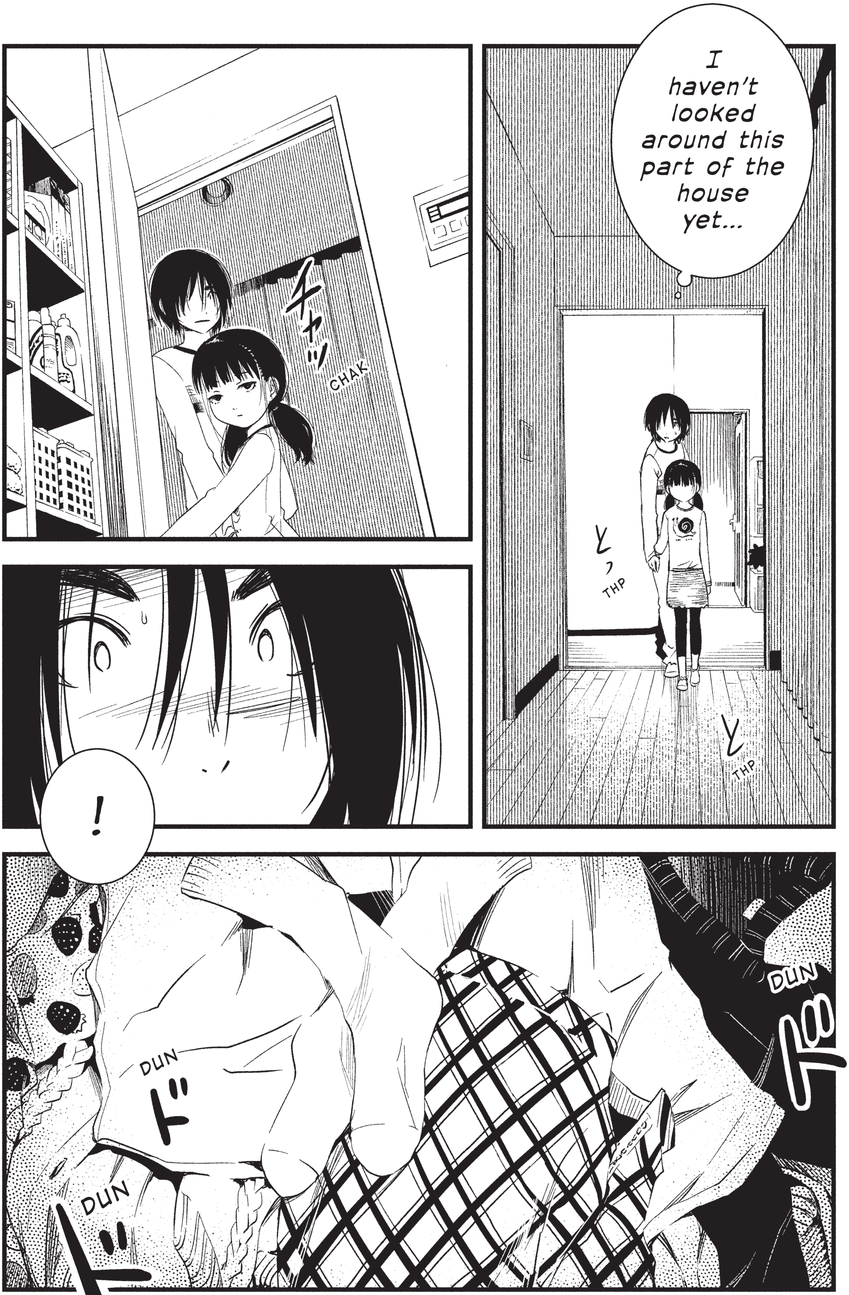

YOU SMELL.
YOU SMELL.
YOU SMELL.

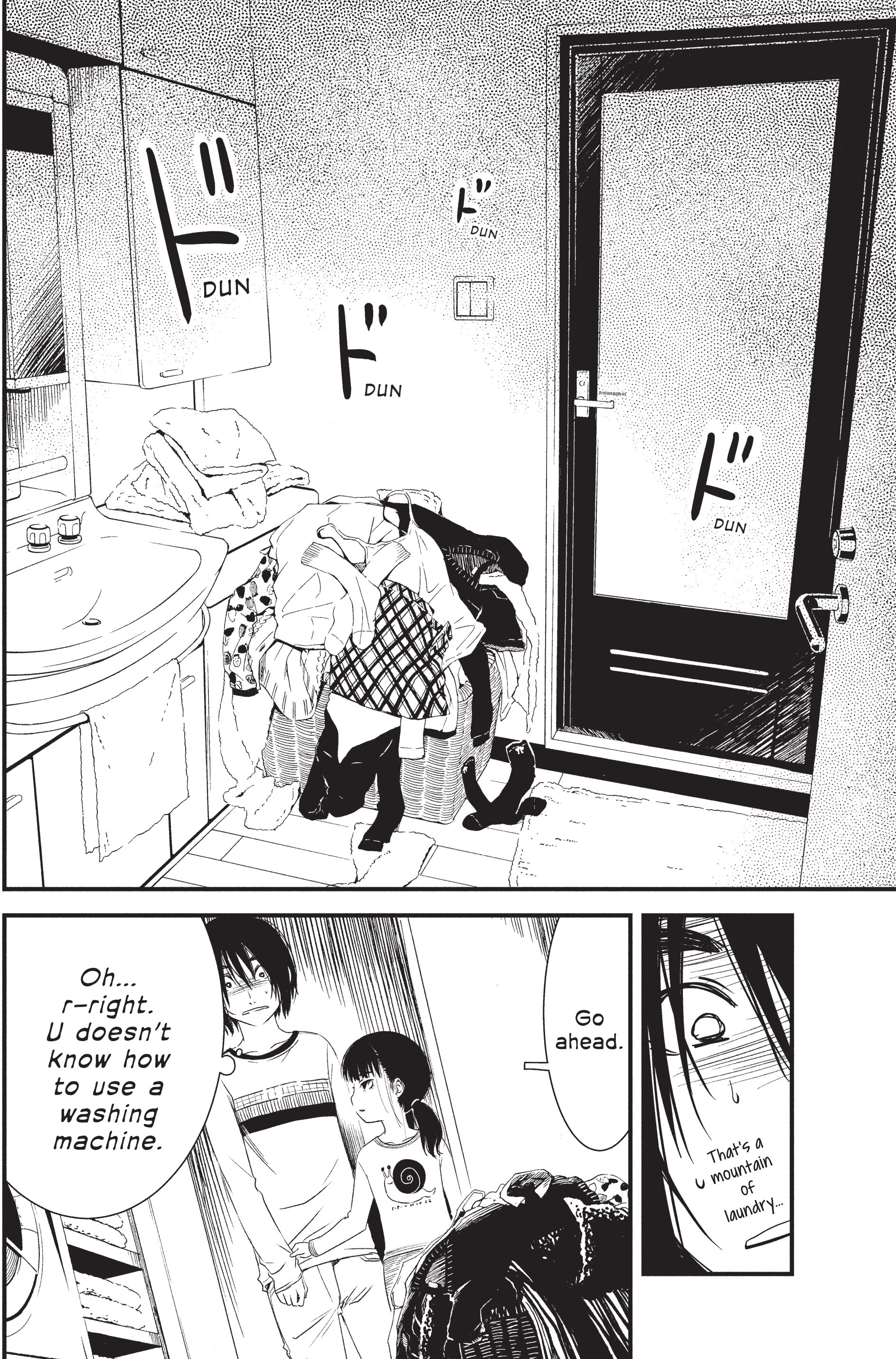

What's scary about kids is that they don't hesitate to tell you things that adults find hard to say...
I've been imprisoned for five days.
すく
RISE
The only way I wouldn't smell by now is if I didn't have sweat glands...
...Well...
ずーん
GLOOM
I still have homework left to do. Could you please go ahead and get in?
SNFF
Huh...?
PO-HOUSE

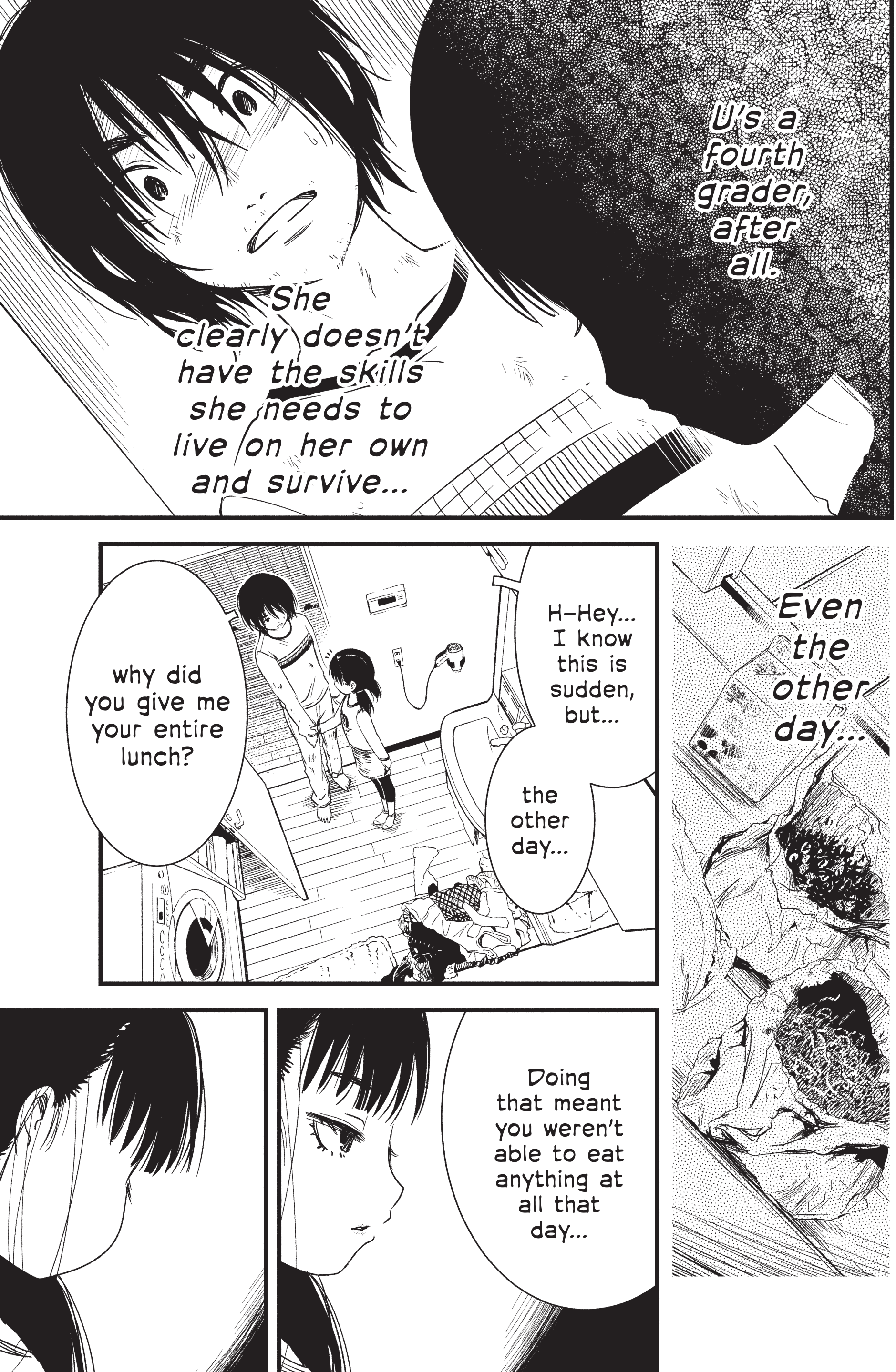

The bath.
The... The bath...?!
がば
JUMP
R- Really? Is it okay?!
It can't be helped.
It already smells bad enough. If it gets any worse,
it will be difficult for me to eat with you.
Oh...
Thanks...
ズキ
STING
ズキ
STING
ズキ
STING

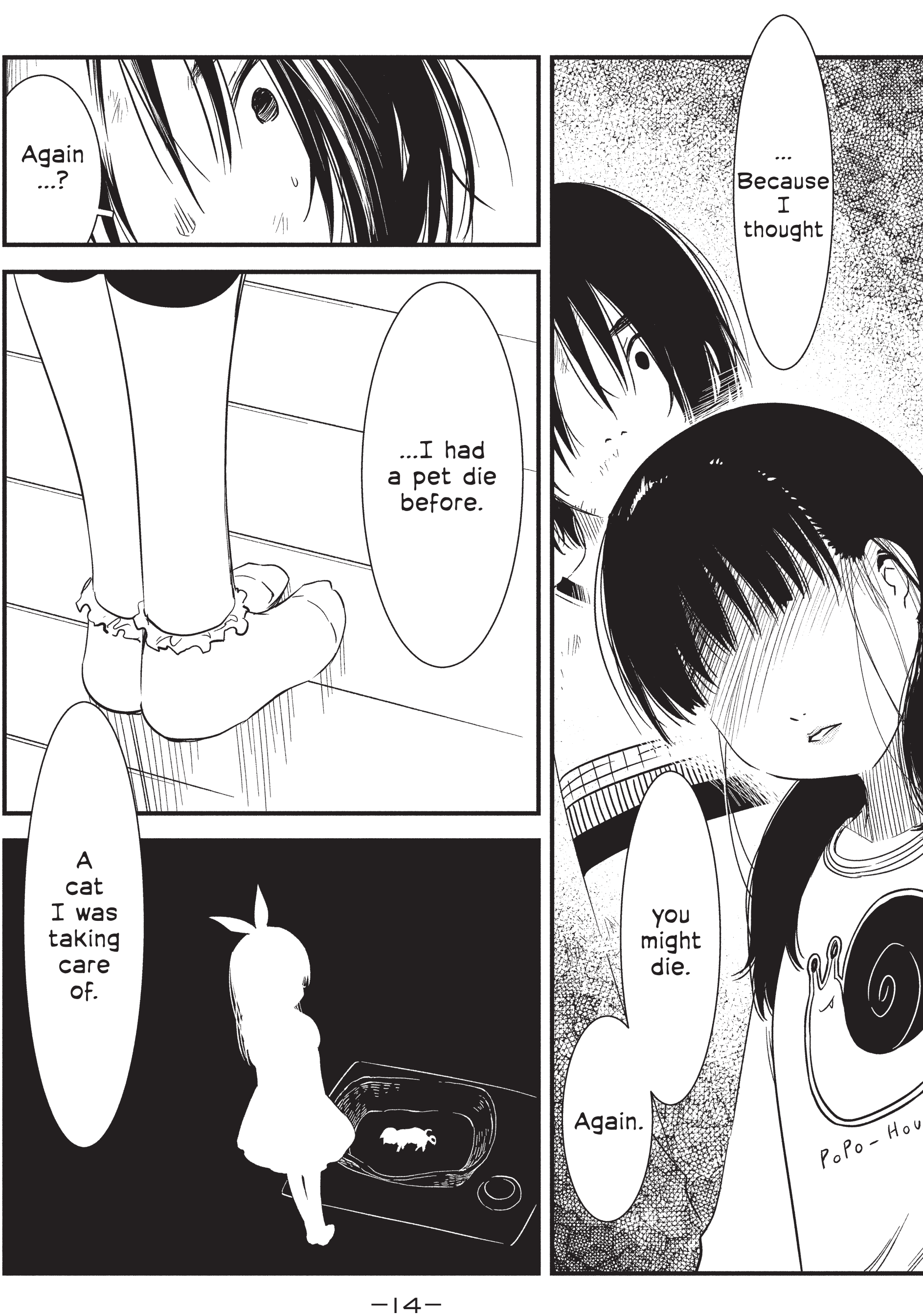

TUG
つい
!
Huh?
Wha...?!
THP と
THP と
THP と
...It's...
THP と
It's been five days, but finally...
THP と
THP と
I've gotten out of that closet in a legal (?) way...!
THP と

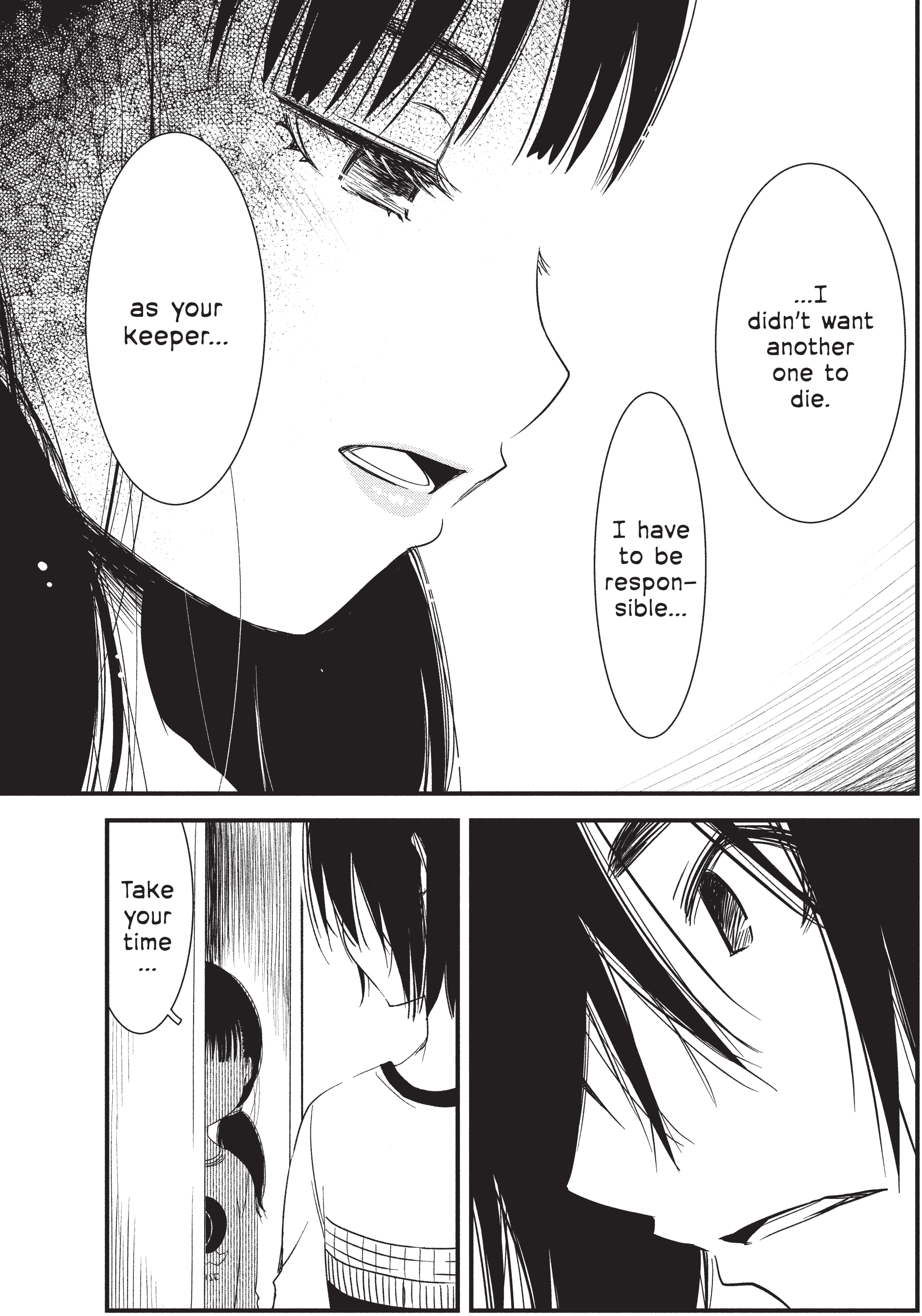

And it was this easy...?
チャ
CHAK
No ...
It's because of everything that's happened over these five days.
U's mental fatigue from having imprisoned me this whole time,
This way.
as well as my tame attitude over these five days...

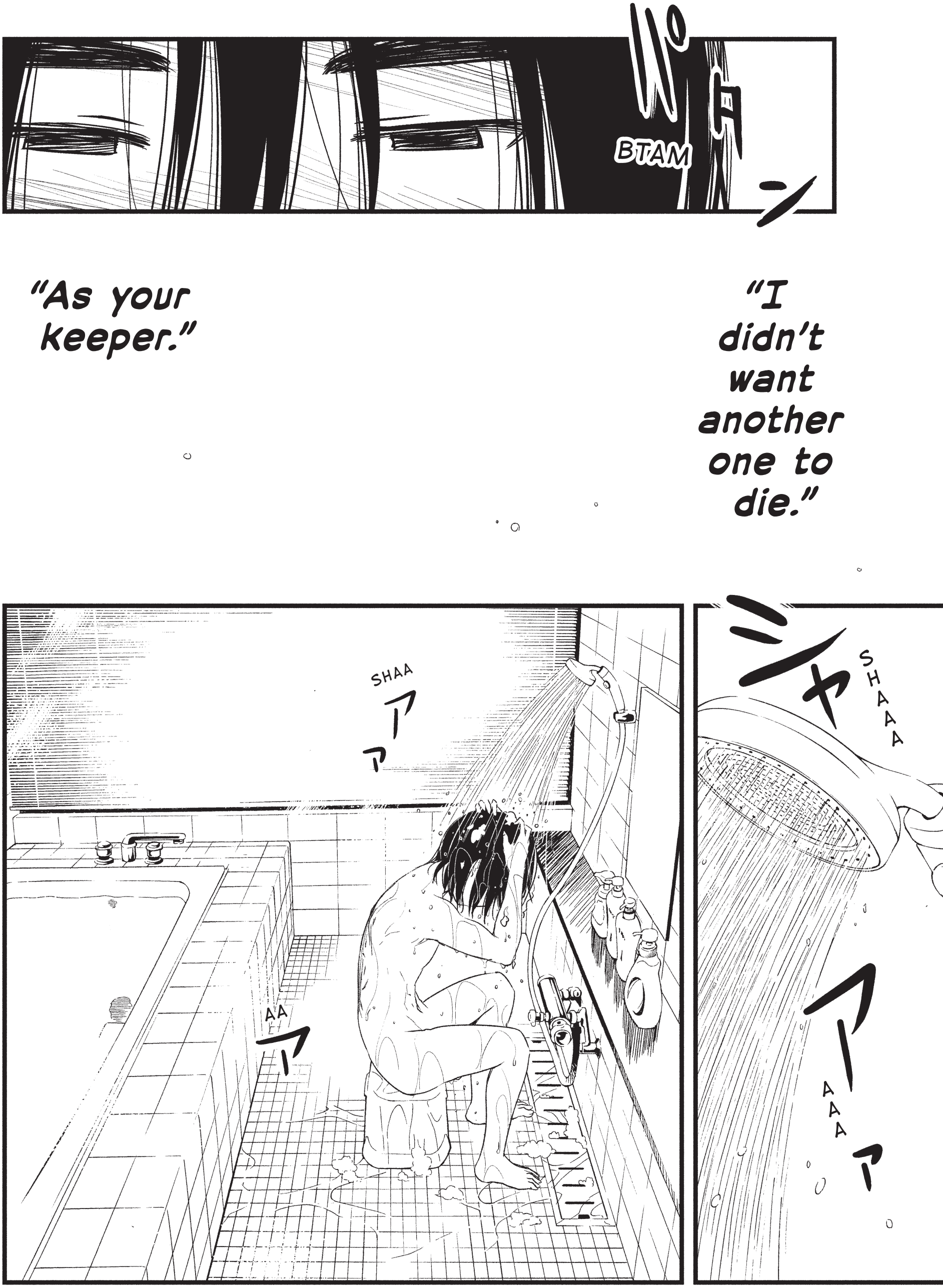

I haven't looked around this part of the house yet...
とっ
THP
と
THP
チャッ
CHAK
!
ド
DUN
ド
DUN
ド
DUN

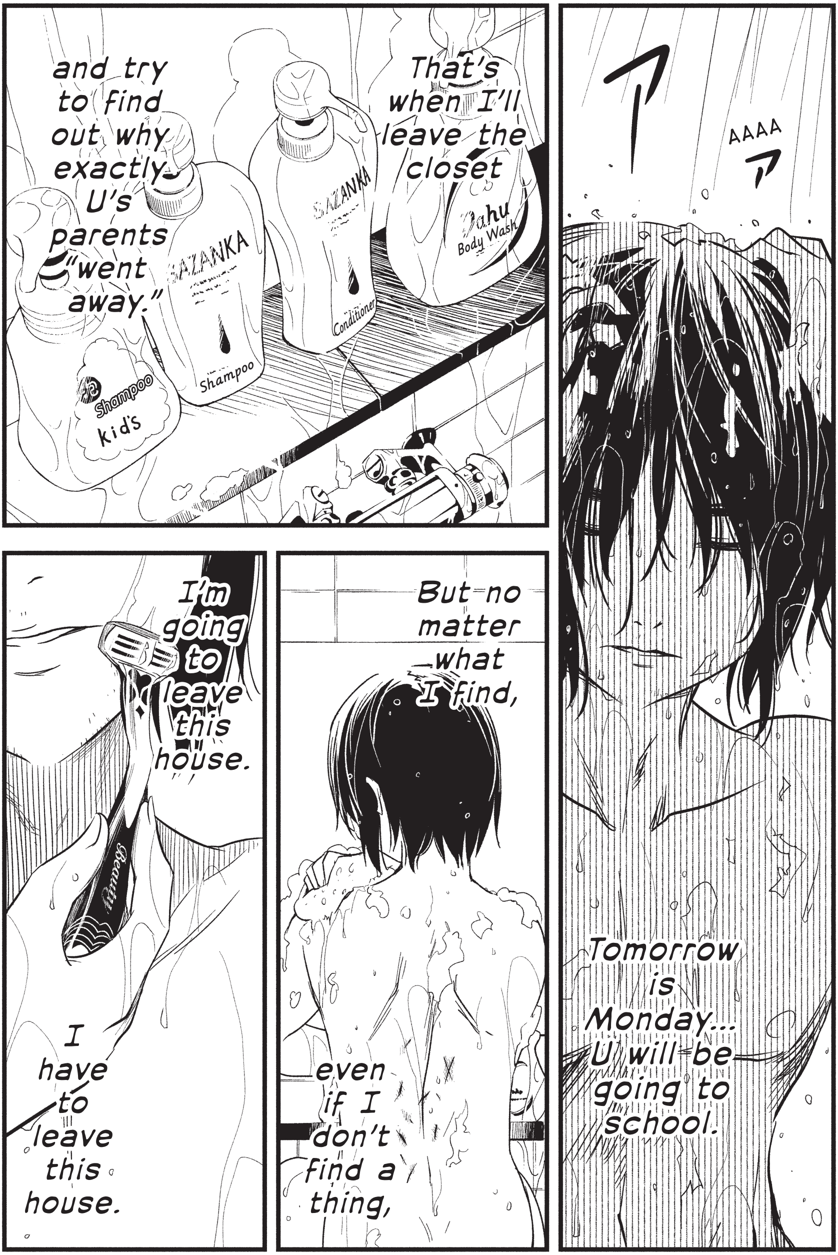

ド DUN
ド DUN
ド DUN
ド DUN
That's a mountain of laundry...
Go ahead.
Oh... r-right. U doesn't know how to use a washing machine.

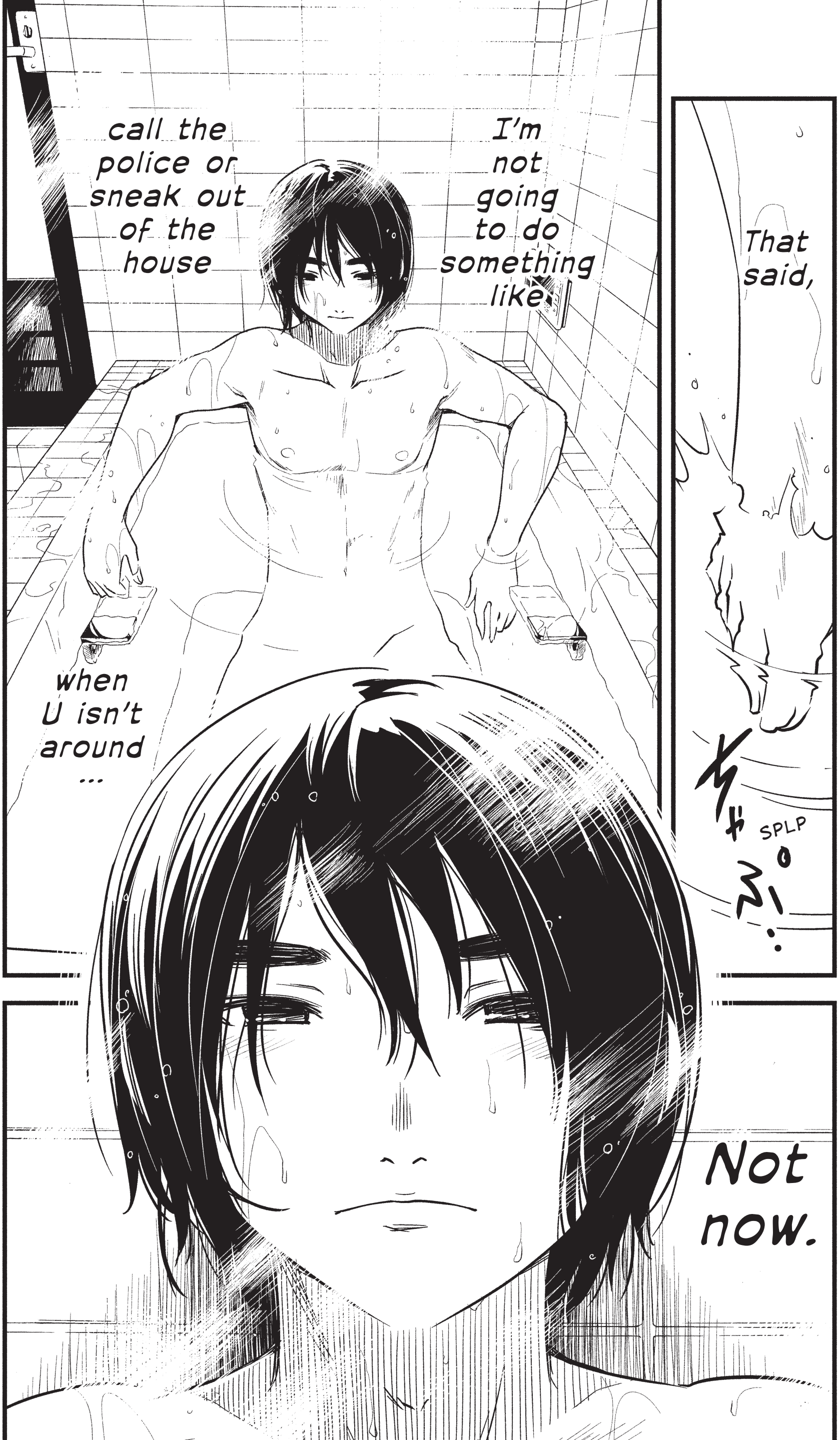

U's a fourth grader, after all.
She clearly doesn't have the skills she needs to live on her own and survive...
Even the other day...
H-Hey... I know this is sudden, but...
the other day...
why did you give me your entire lunch?
Doing that meant you weren't able to eat anything at all that day...

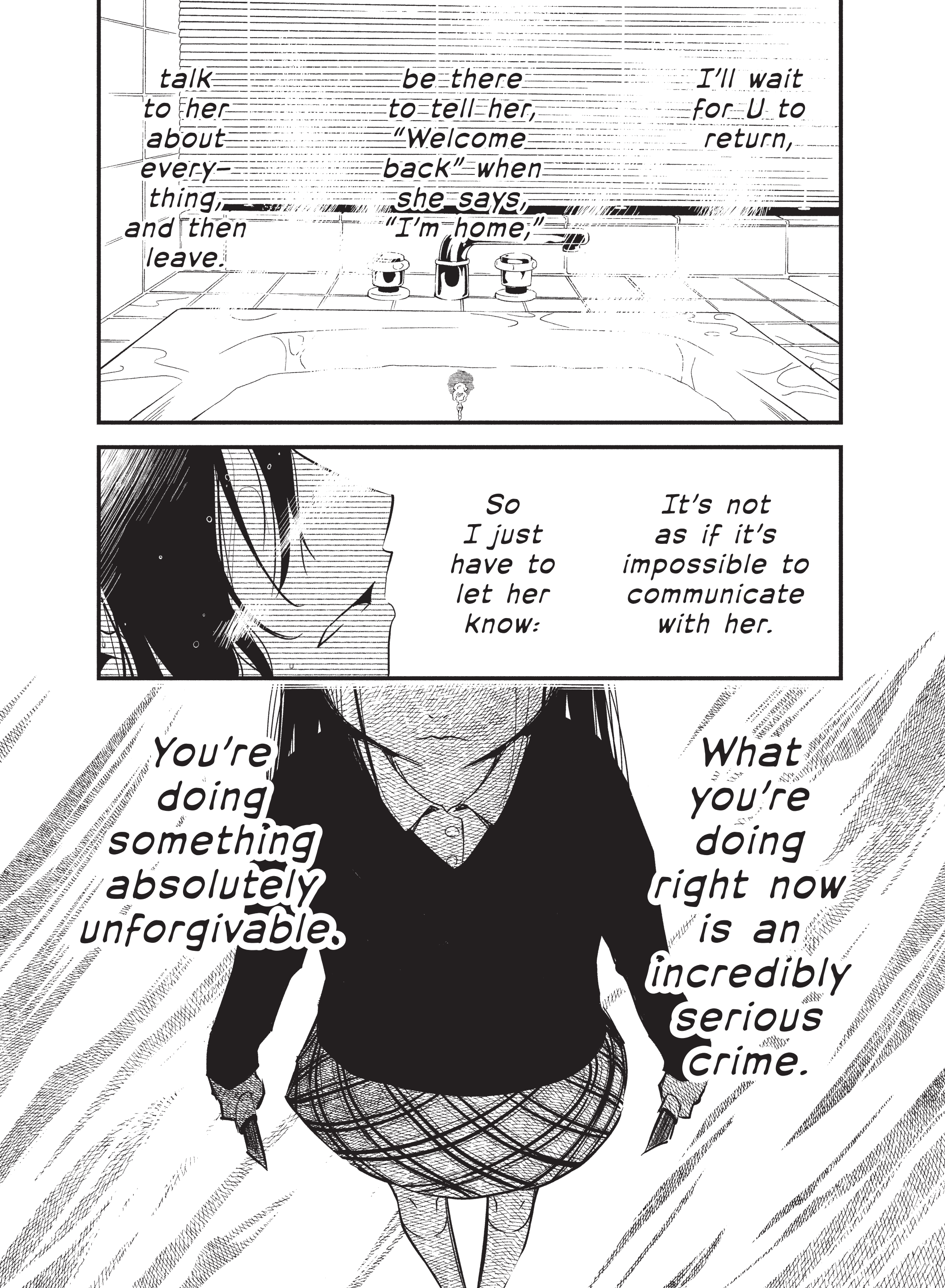

... Because I thought
you might die.
Again.
PoPo-Hou
Again ...?
...I had a pet die before.
A cat I was taking care of.

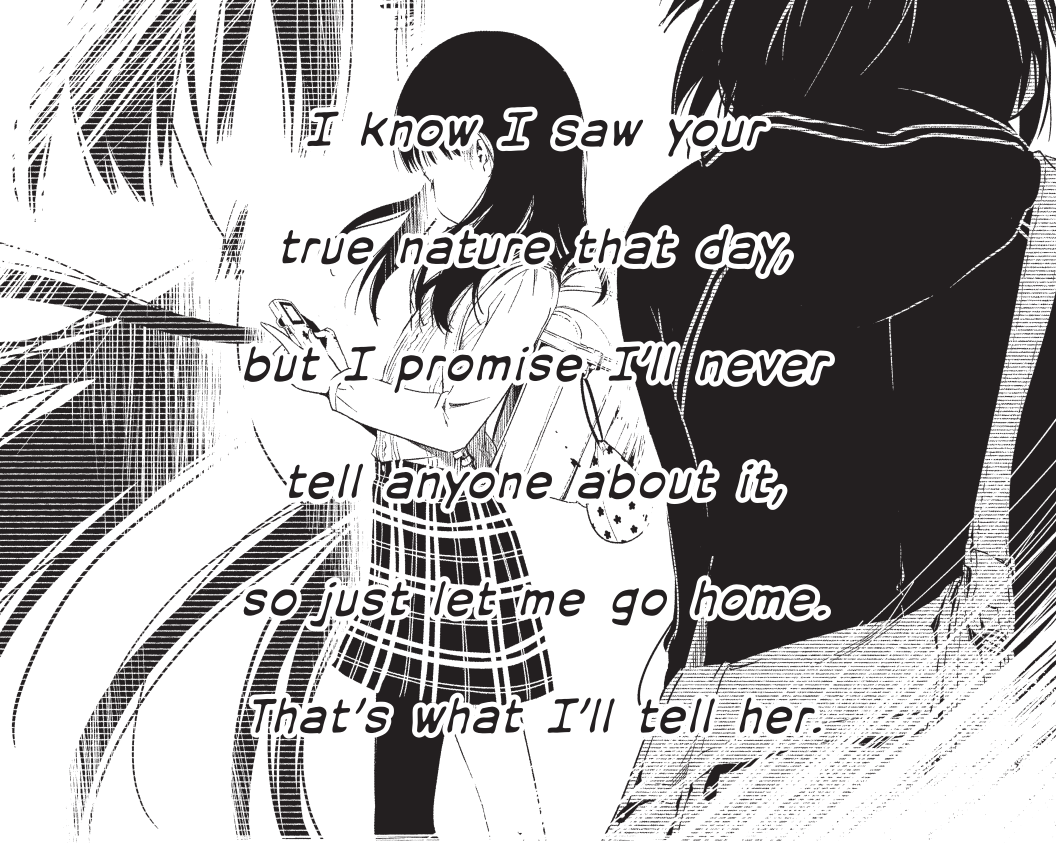

...I didn't want another one to die.
I have to be responsible...
as your keeper...
Take your time ...

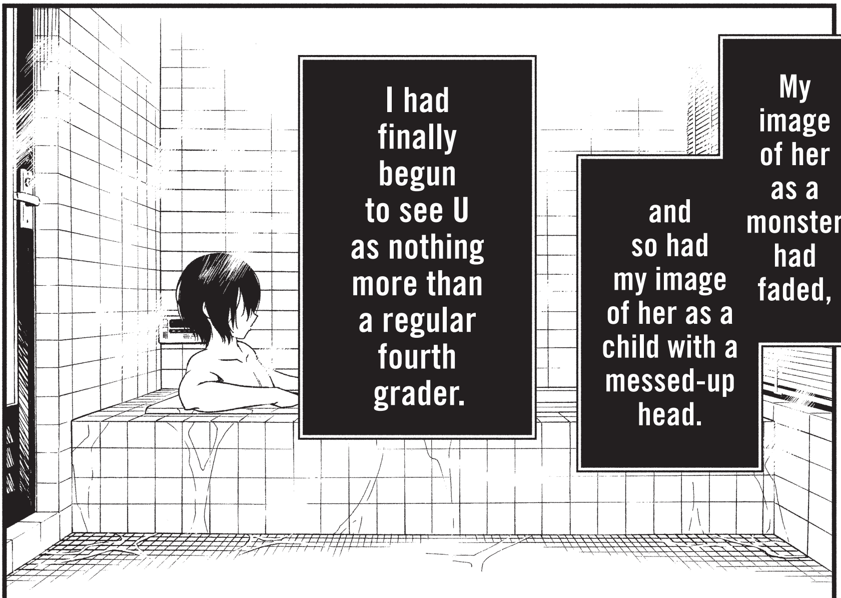

パタン
BTAM
"I didn't want another one to die."
"As your keeper."
シャアアアア
SHAAA
AAA
SHAA
アア
AA
ア

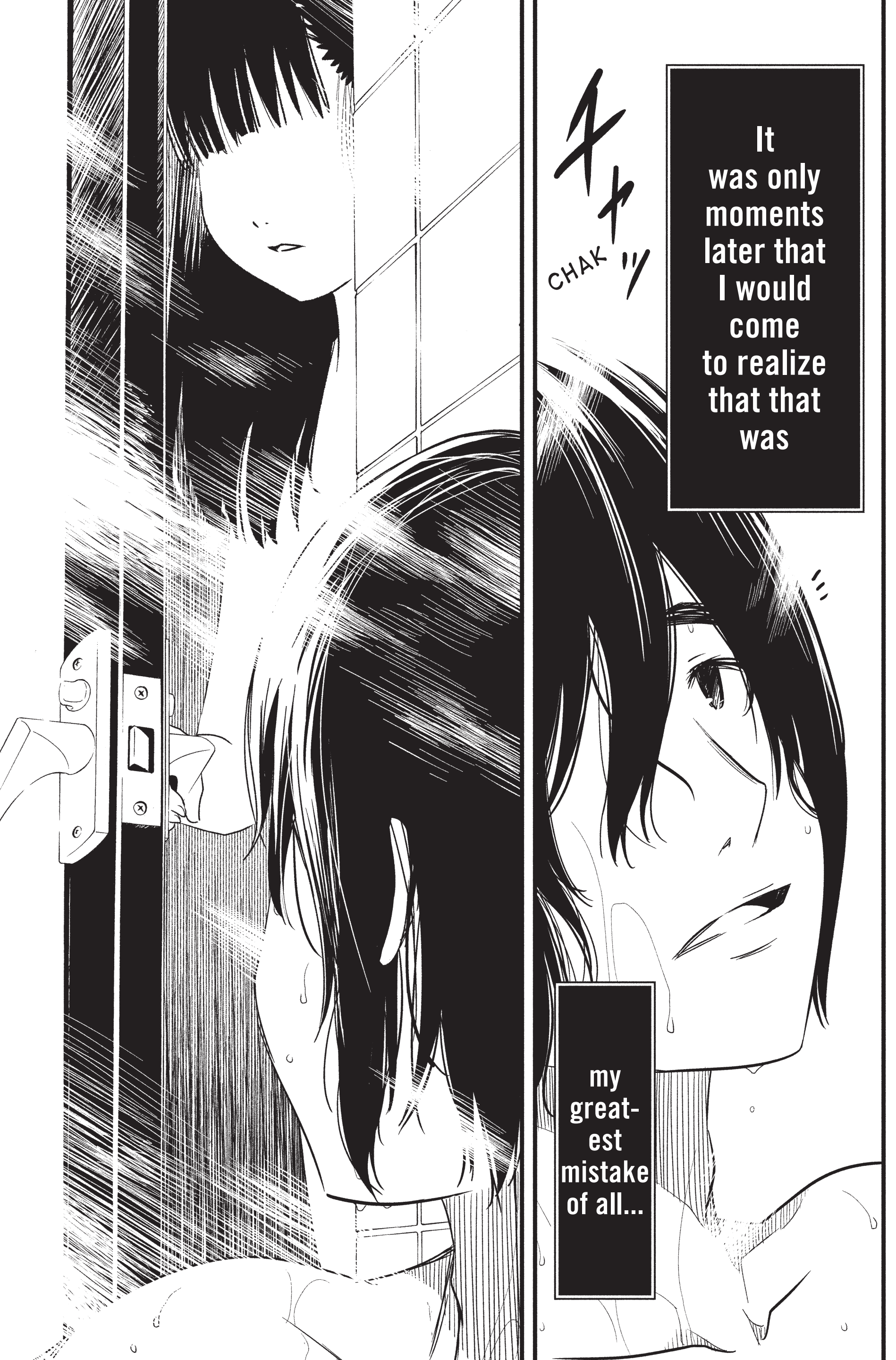

ア AAAA ア
Tomorrow is Monday... U will be going to school.
That's when I'll leave the closet
and try to find out why exactly U's parents "went away."
Dahu Body Wash
SAZANKA Conditioner
SAZANKA Shampoo
Shampoo kid's
But no matter what I find,
even if I don't find a thing,
I'm going to leave this house.
Beauty
I have to leave this house.

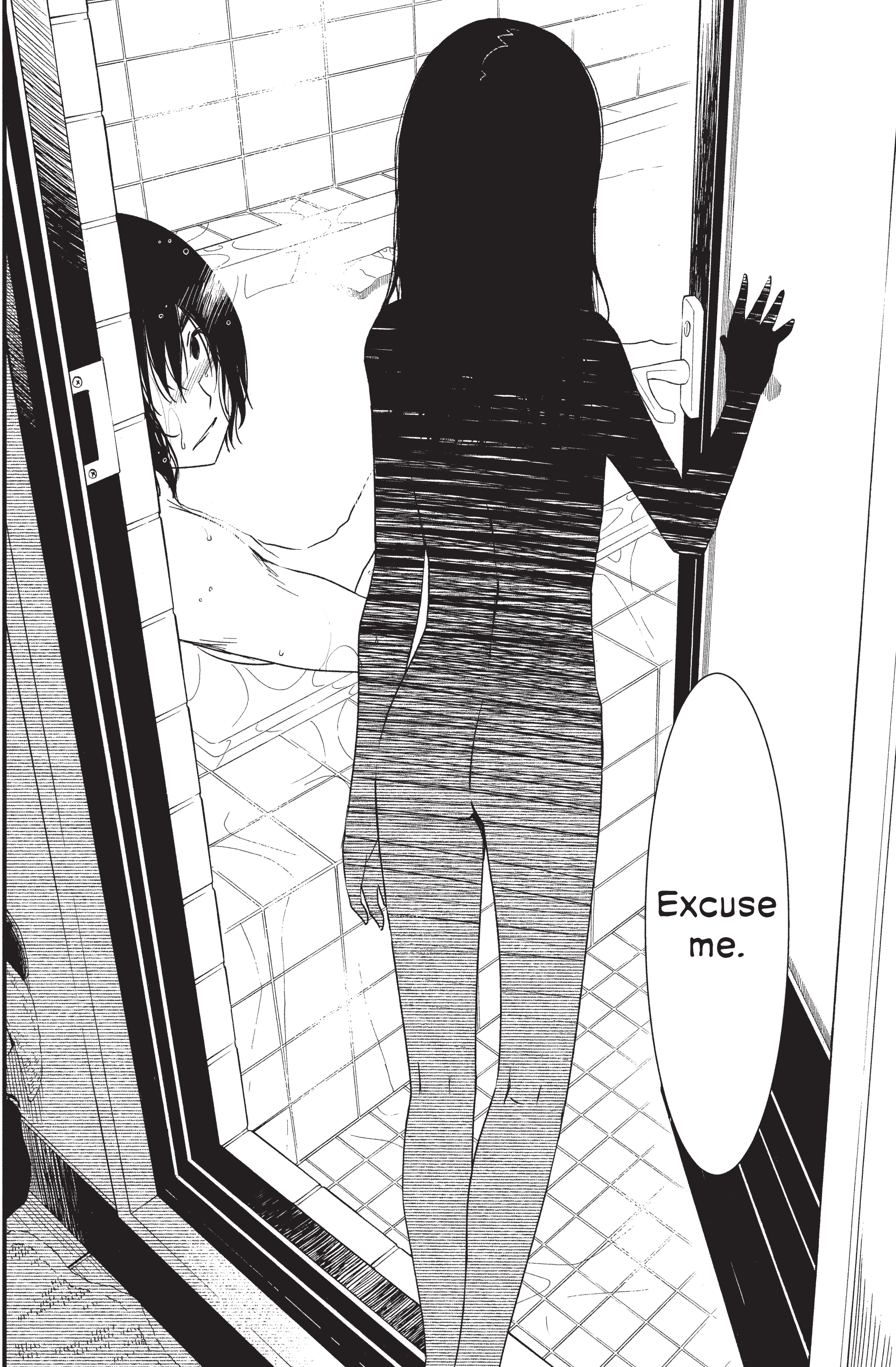

That said,
SPLP
I'm not going to do something like
call the police or sneak out of the house
when U isn't around ...
Not now.

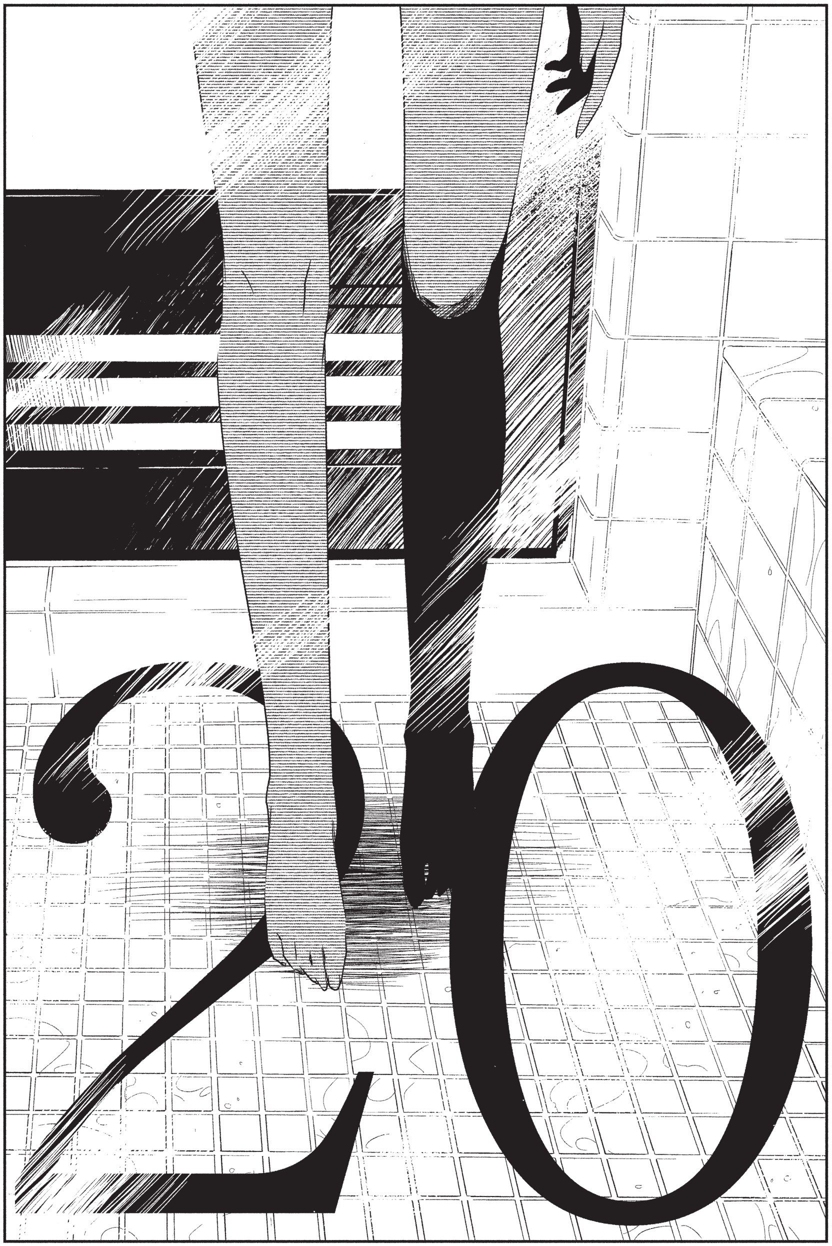

I'll wait for U to return,
be there to tell her, "Welcome back" when she says, "I'm home,"
talk to her about everything, and then leave.
It's not as if it's impossible to communicate with her.
So I just have to let her know:
What you're doing right now is an incredibly serious crime.
You're doing something absolutely unforgivable.


I know I saw your true nature that day, but I promise I'll never tell anyone about it, so just let me go home.
That's what I'll tell her.


My image of her as a monster had faded,
and so had my image of her as a child with a messed-up head.
I had finally begun to see U as nothing more than a regular fourth grader.


It was only moments later that I would come to realize that that was
CHAK
my greatest mistake of all...


Excuse me.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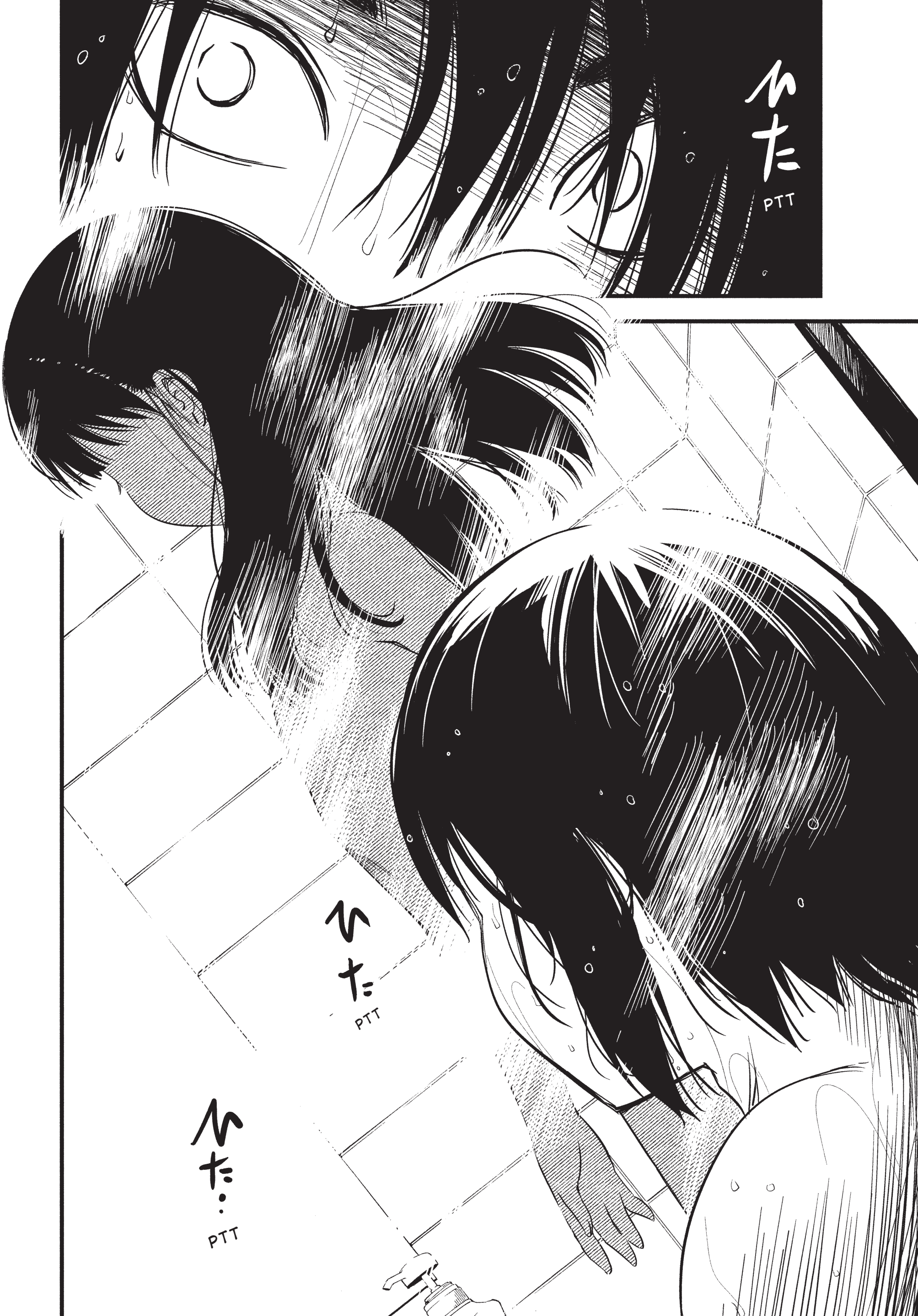
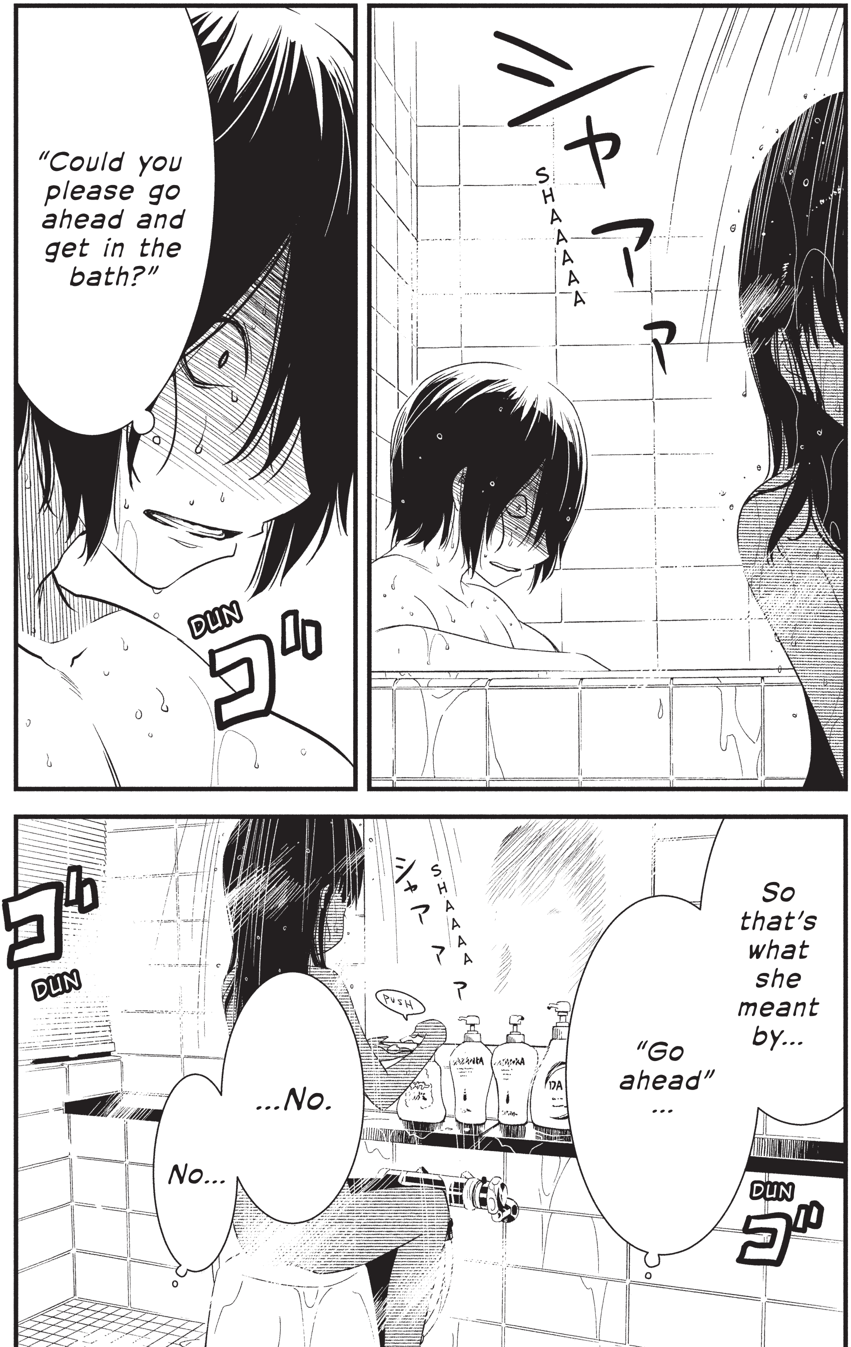
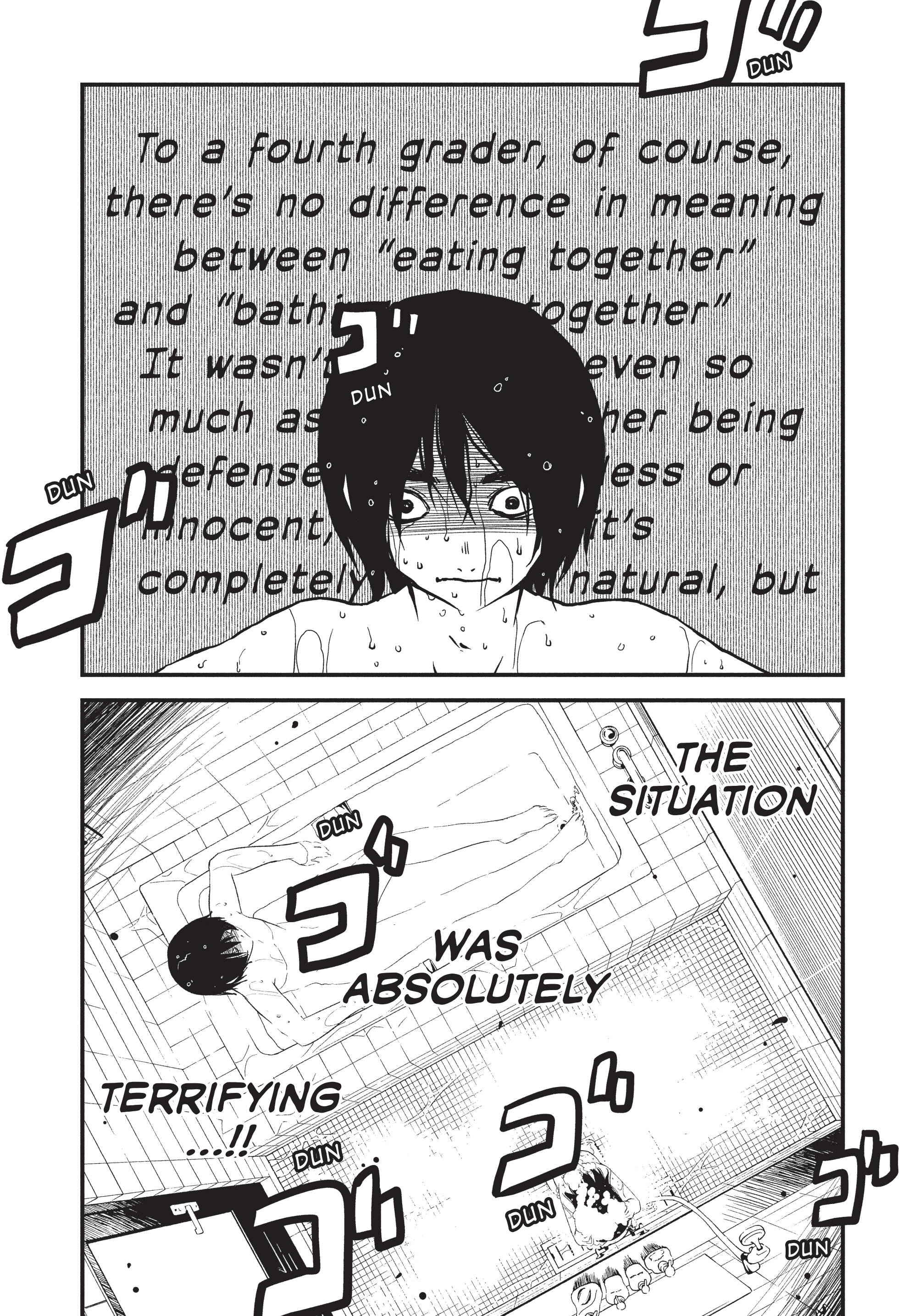
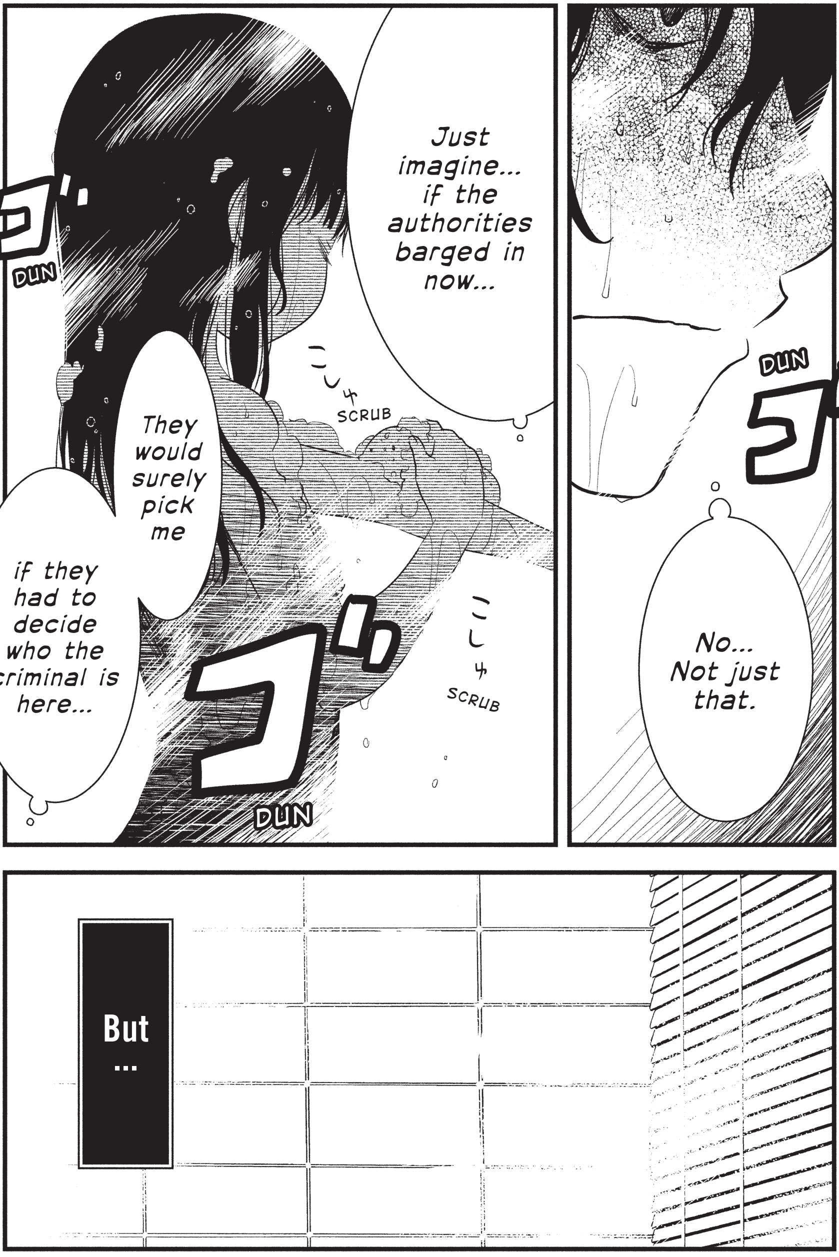
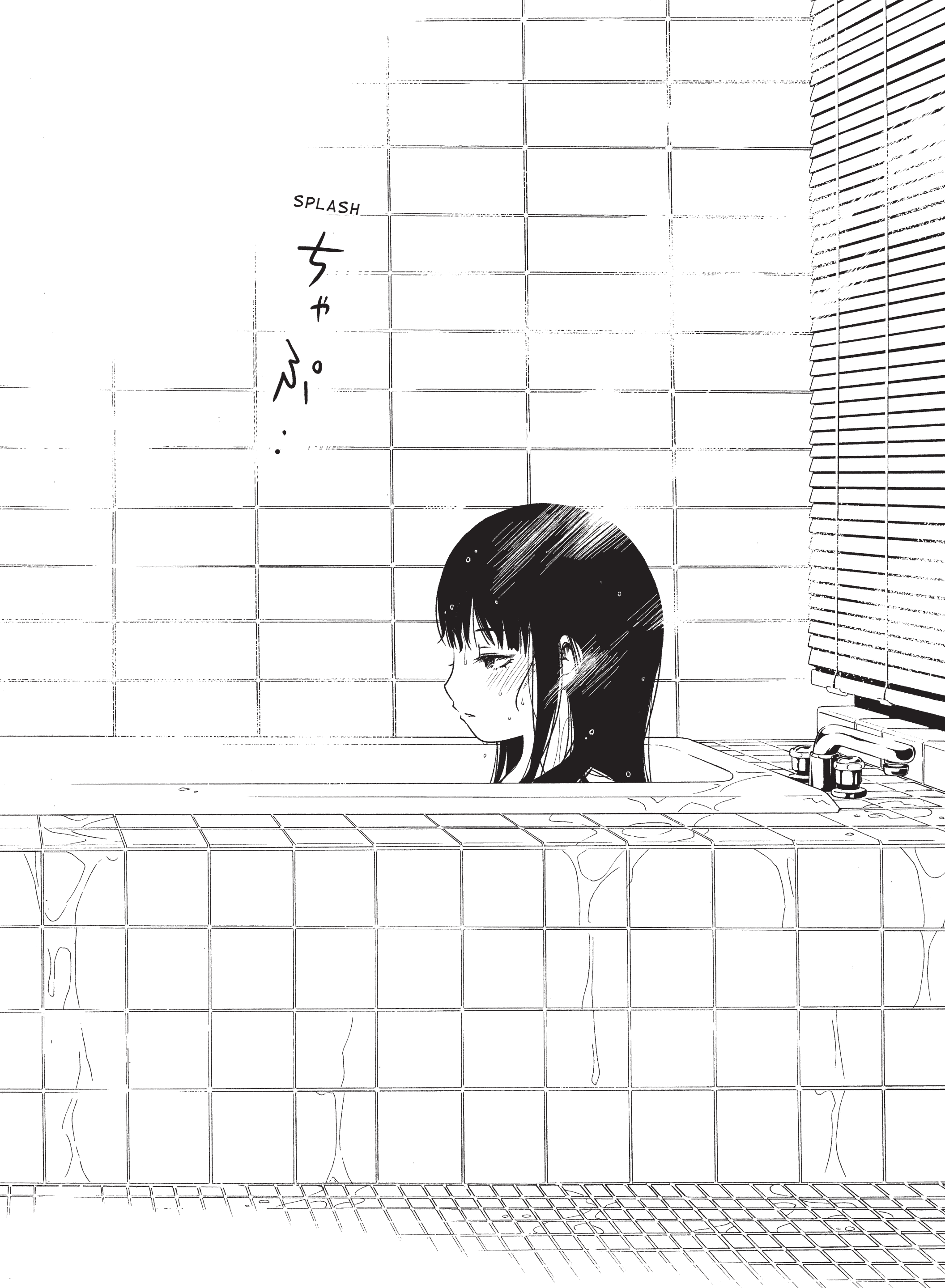
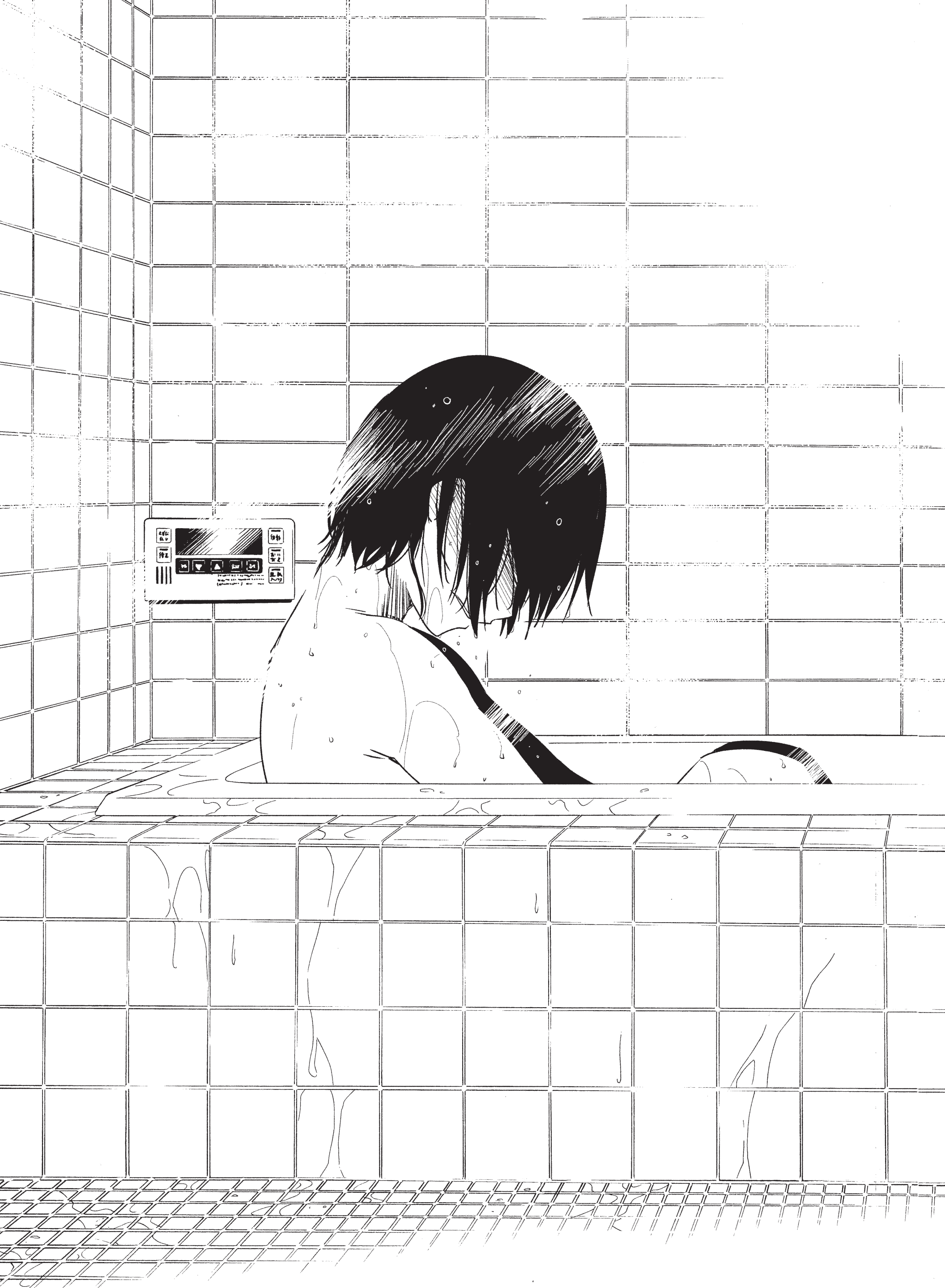

ひた
PTT
ひた
PTT
ひた‥
PTT

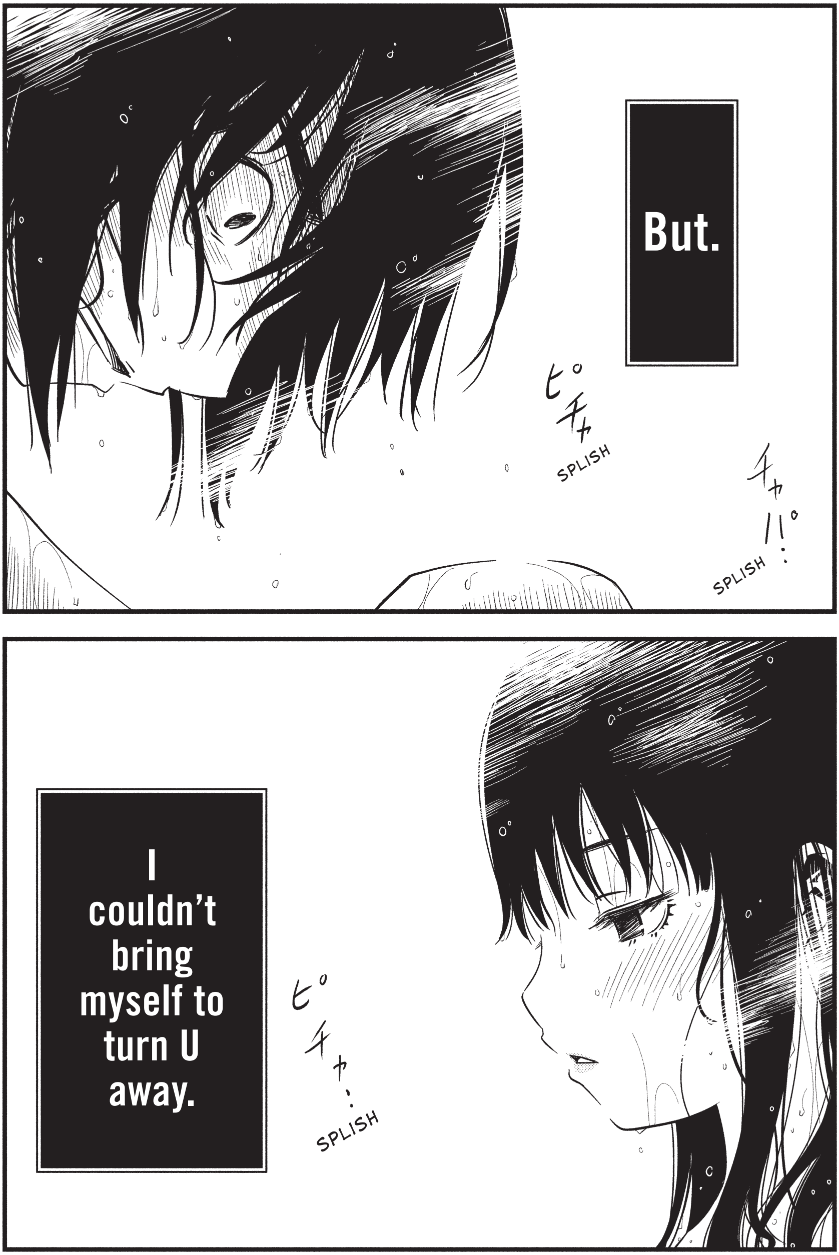

シャアーァ
SHAAAAA
"Could you please go ahead and get in the bath?"
DUN
ゴ
So that's what she meant by... "Go ahead"...
DUN
ゴ
シャアーァ
SHAAAA
PUSH
...No.
No...
ゴ
DUN

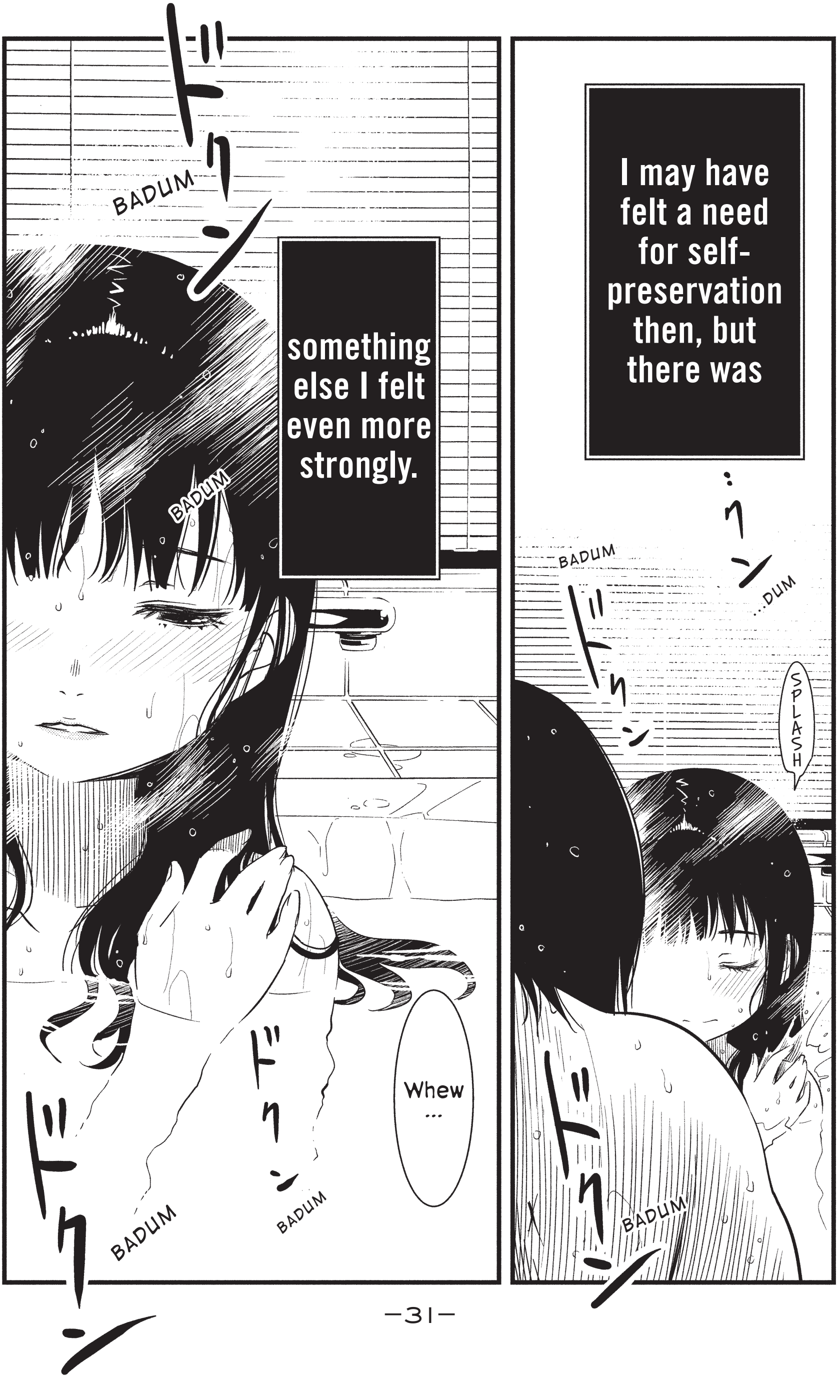

ゴ DUN
To a fourth grader, of course, there's no difference in meaning between "eating together" and "bathi together"
It wasn't even so much as her being defense less or innocent, it's completely natural, but
ゴ DUN
ゴ DUN
THE SITUATION
ゴ DUN
WAS ABSOLUTELY
TERRIFYING ...!!
ゴ DUN
ゴ DUN
ゴ DUN

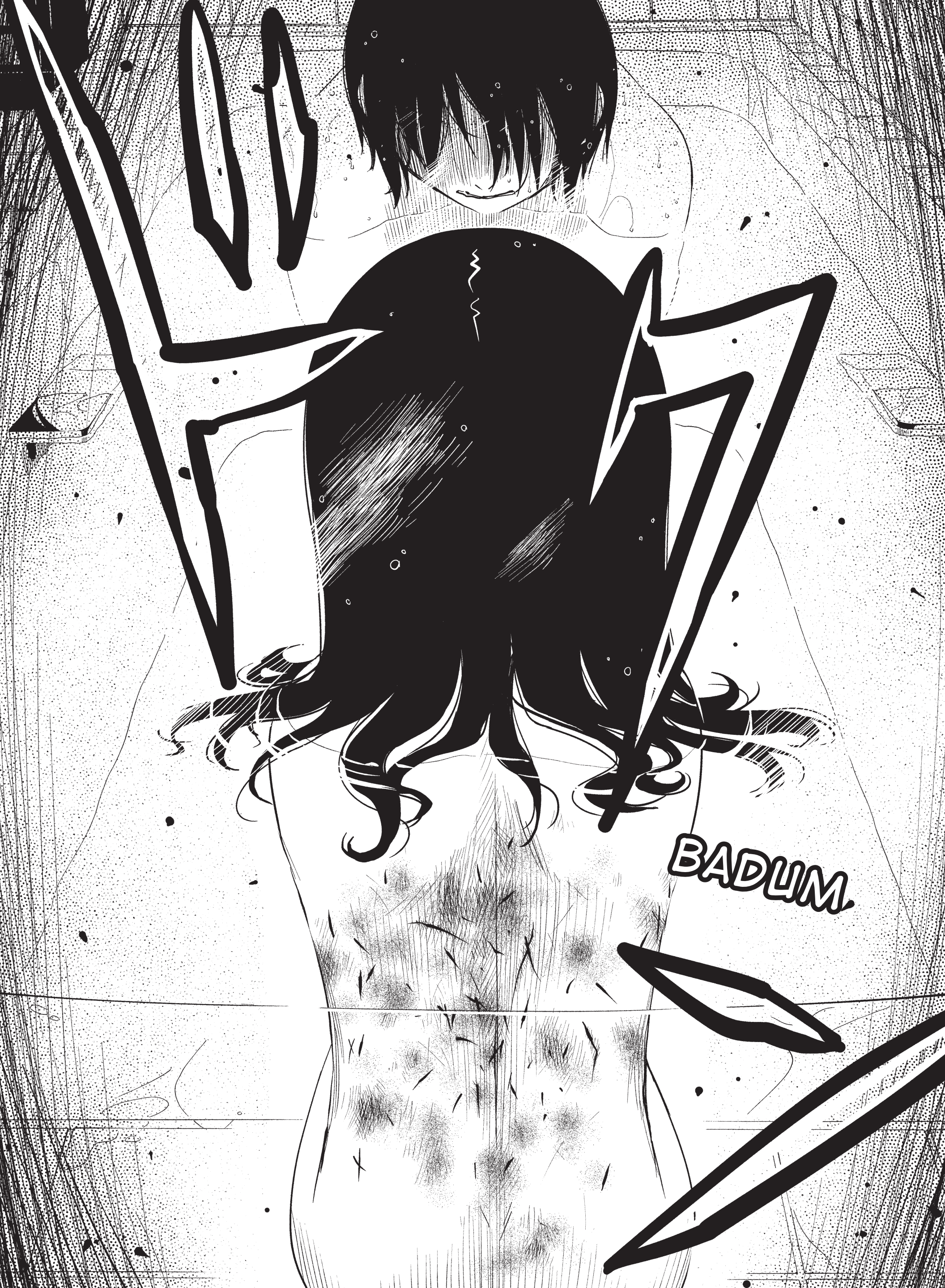

Just imagine... if the authorities barged in now...
They would surely pick me
if they had to decide who the criminal is here...
ゴッ DUN
こしゅ SCRUB
こしゅ SCRUB
ゴッ DUN
ゴッ DUN
No... Not just that.
But ...

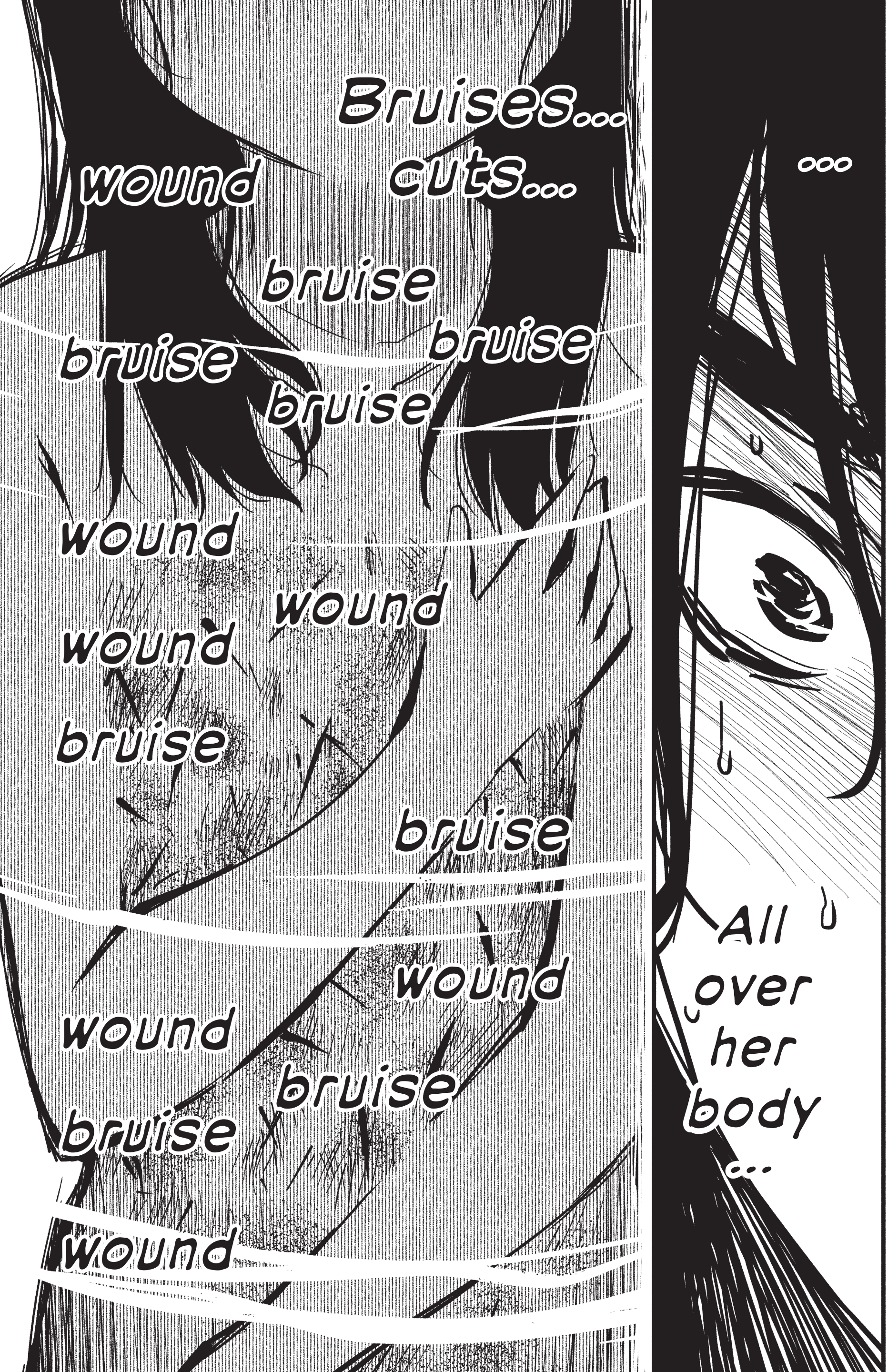

SPLASH
ちゃぷ…

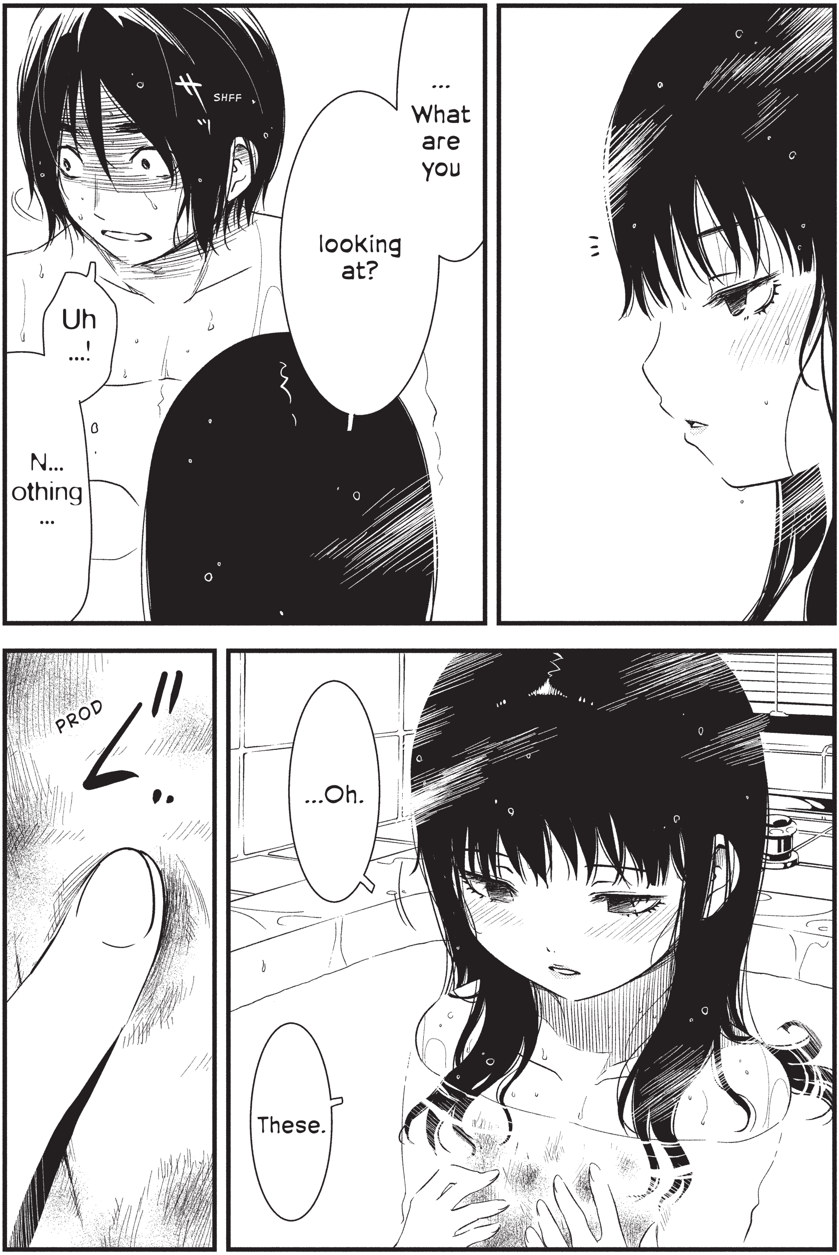


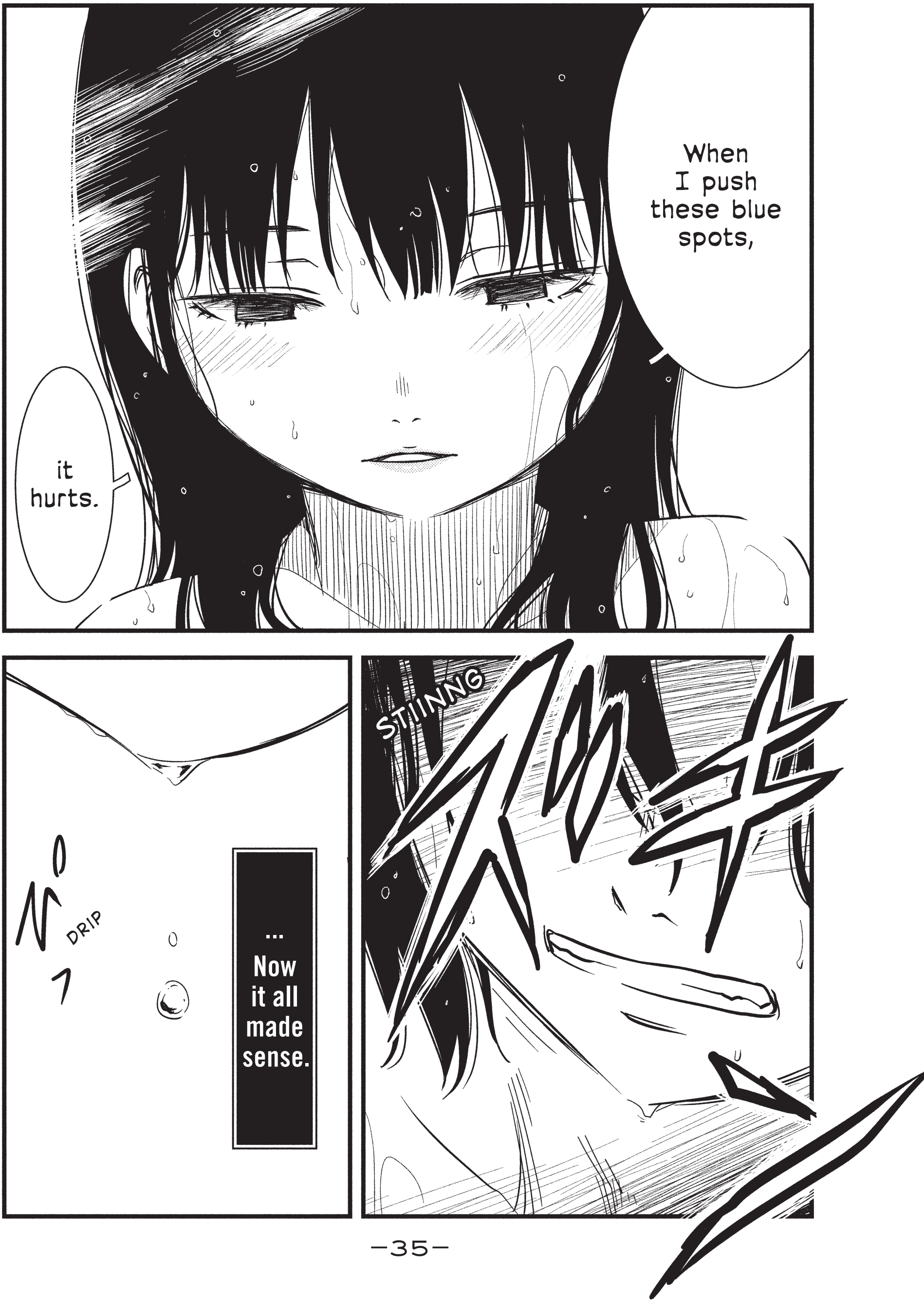

But.
ピチャ
SPLISH
チャパ：
SPLISH
I couldn't bring myself to turn U away.
ピチャ…
SPLISH

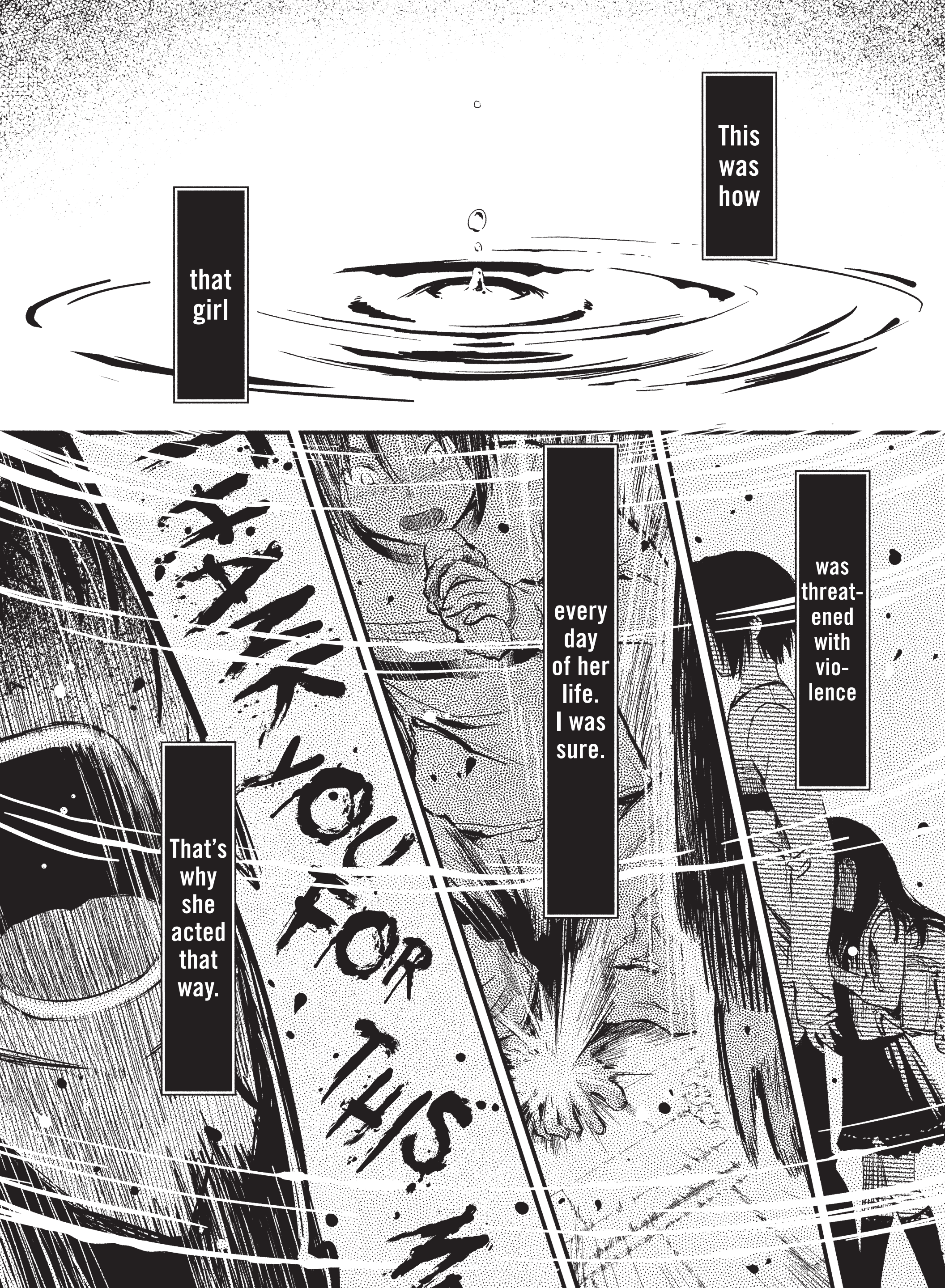

I may have felt a need for self-preservation then, but there was
…クン
…DUM
BADUM
ドクン
SPLASH
ドクン
BADUM
something else I felt even more strongly.
ドクン
BADUM
BADUM
Whew …
ドクン
BADUM
ドクン
BADUM

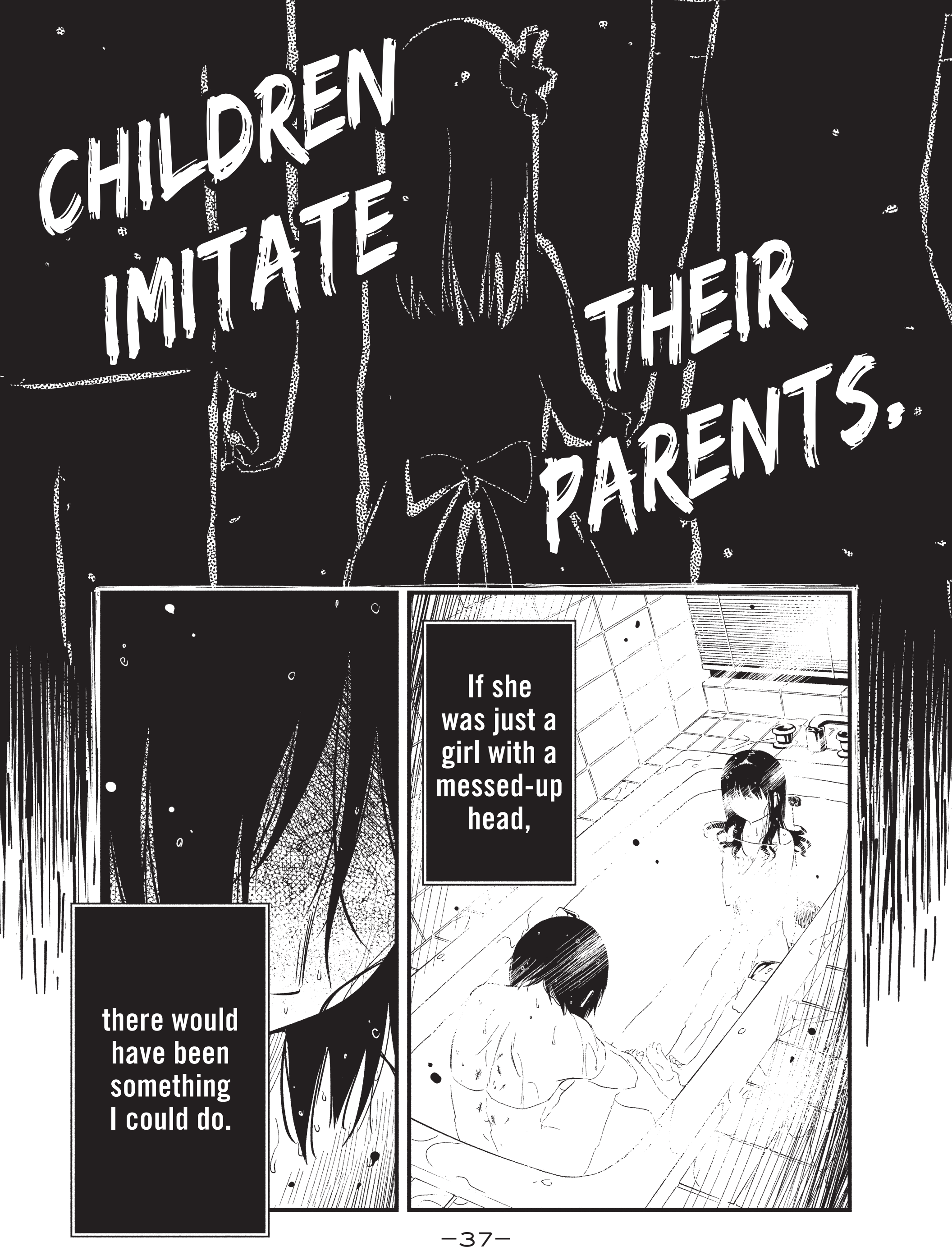

BADUM

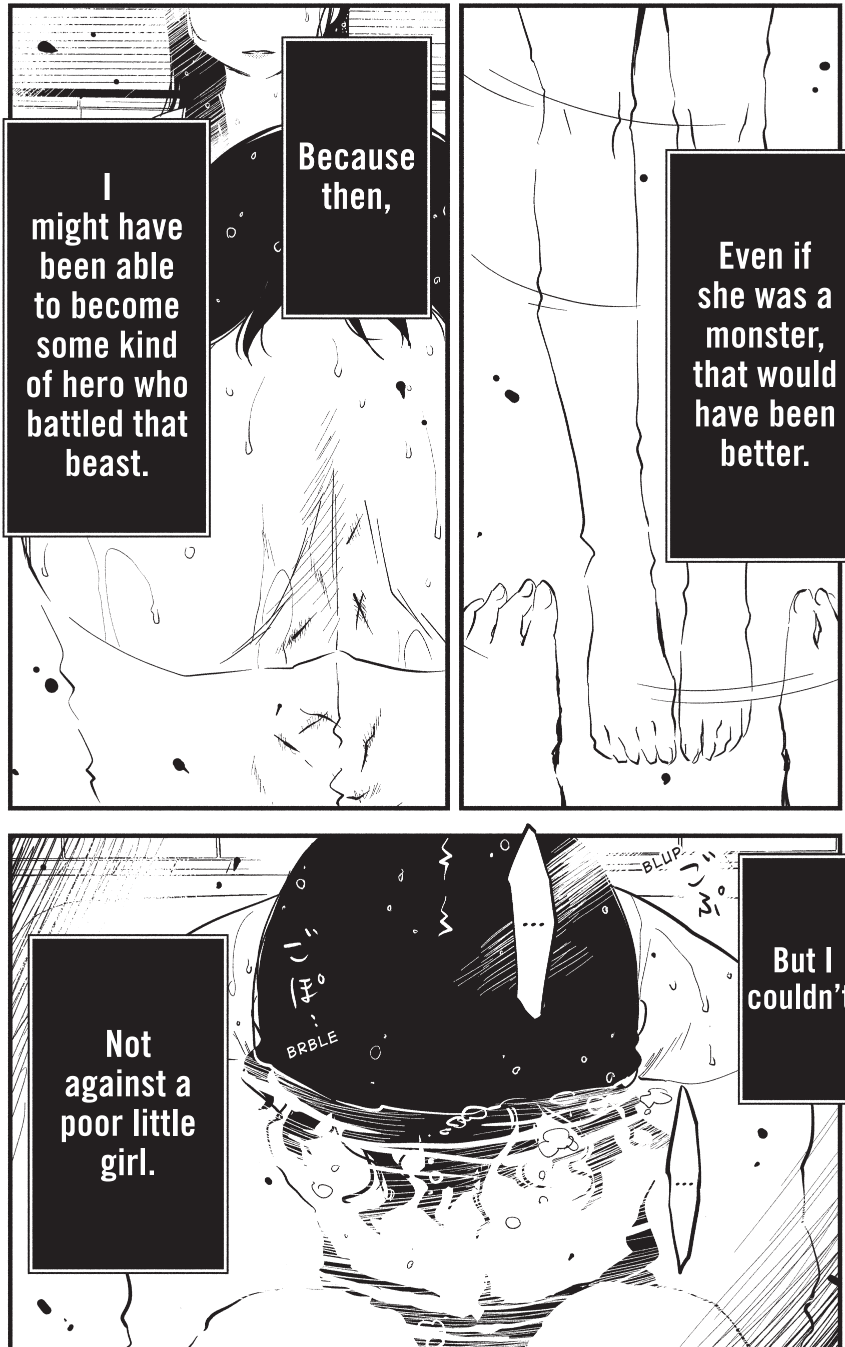

...
All over her body ...
Bruises...
cuts...
wound
bruise
bruise
bruise
bruise
wound
wound
wound
bruise
bruise
wound
wound
bruise
bruise
wound

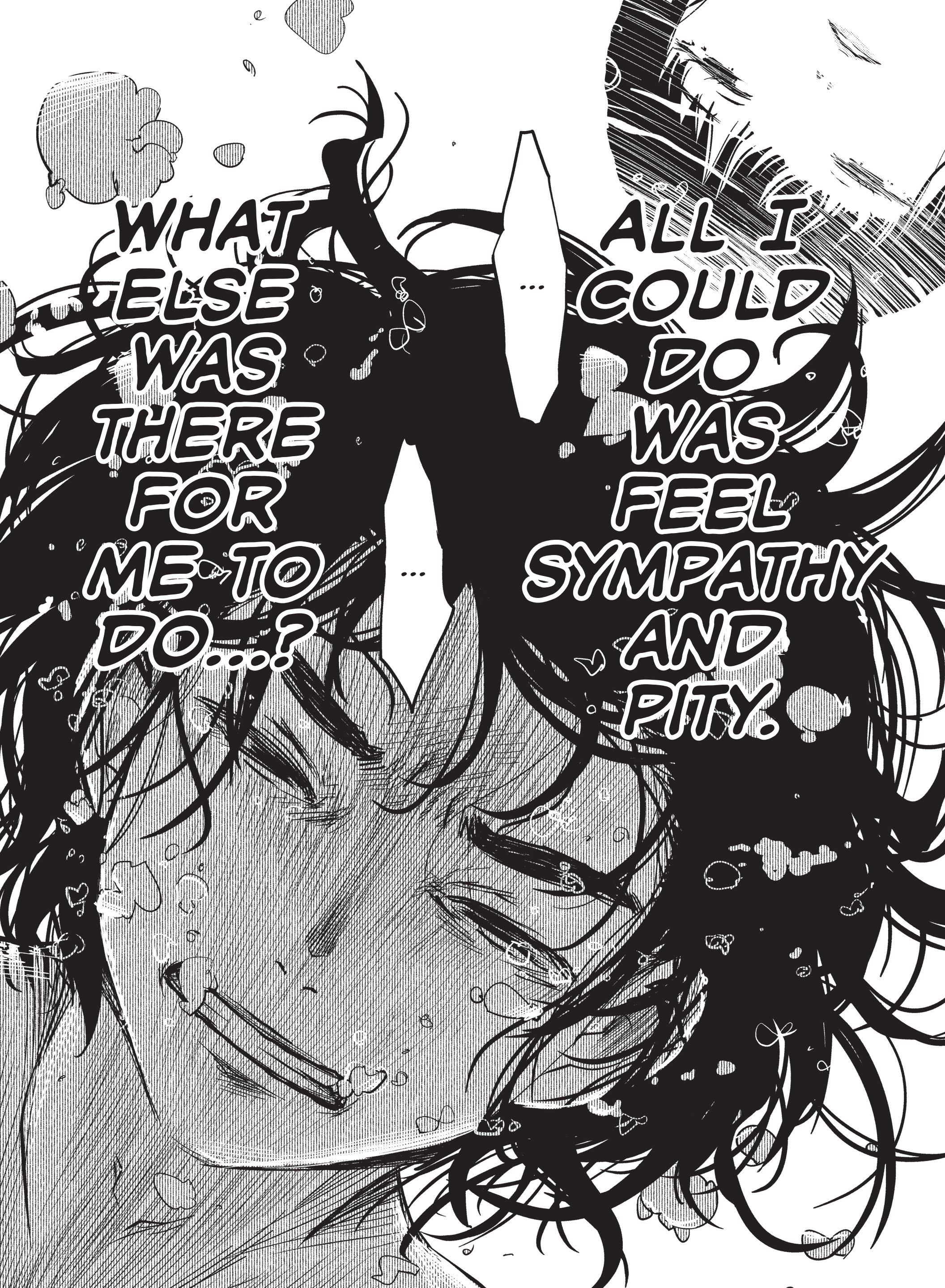

...What are you looking at?
SHFF
Uh...!
N...othing...
...Oh.
These.
PROD

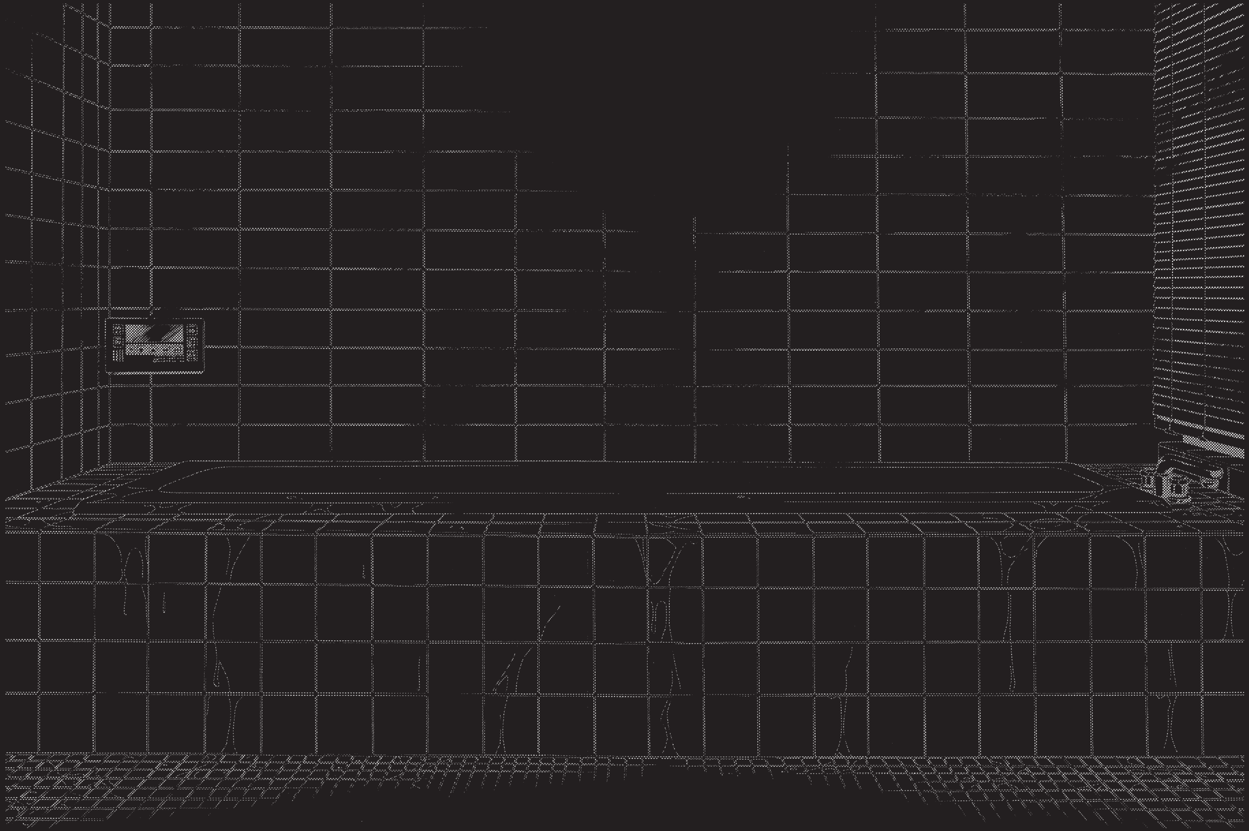

When I push these blue spots,
it hurts.
STIINNG
DRIP
... Now it all made sense.


This was how
that girl
was threatened with violence
every day of her life. I was sure.
That's why she acted that way.
HANK YOU FOR THIS


CHILDREN IMITATE THEIR PARENTS.
If she was just a girl with a messed-up head,
there would have been something I could do.


Even if she was a monster, that would have been better.
Because then,
I might have been able to become some kind of hero who battled that beast.
BLUP
つぷ
But I couldn't.
...
ごぽ
BRBLE
...
Not against a poor little girl.


...
...
ALL I COULD DO WAS FEEL SYMPATHY AND PITY.
WHAT ELSE WAS THERE FOR ME TO DO...?



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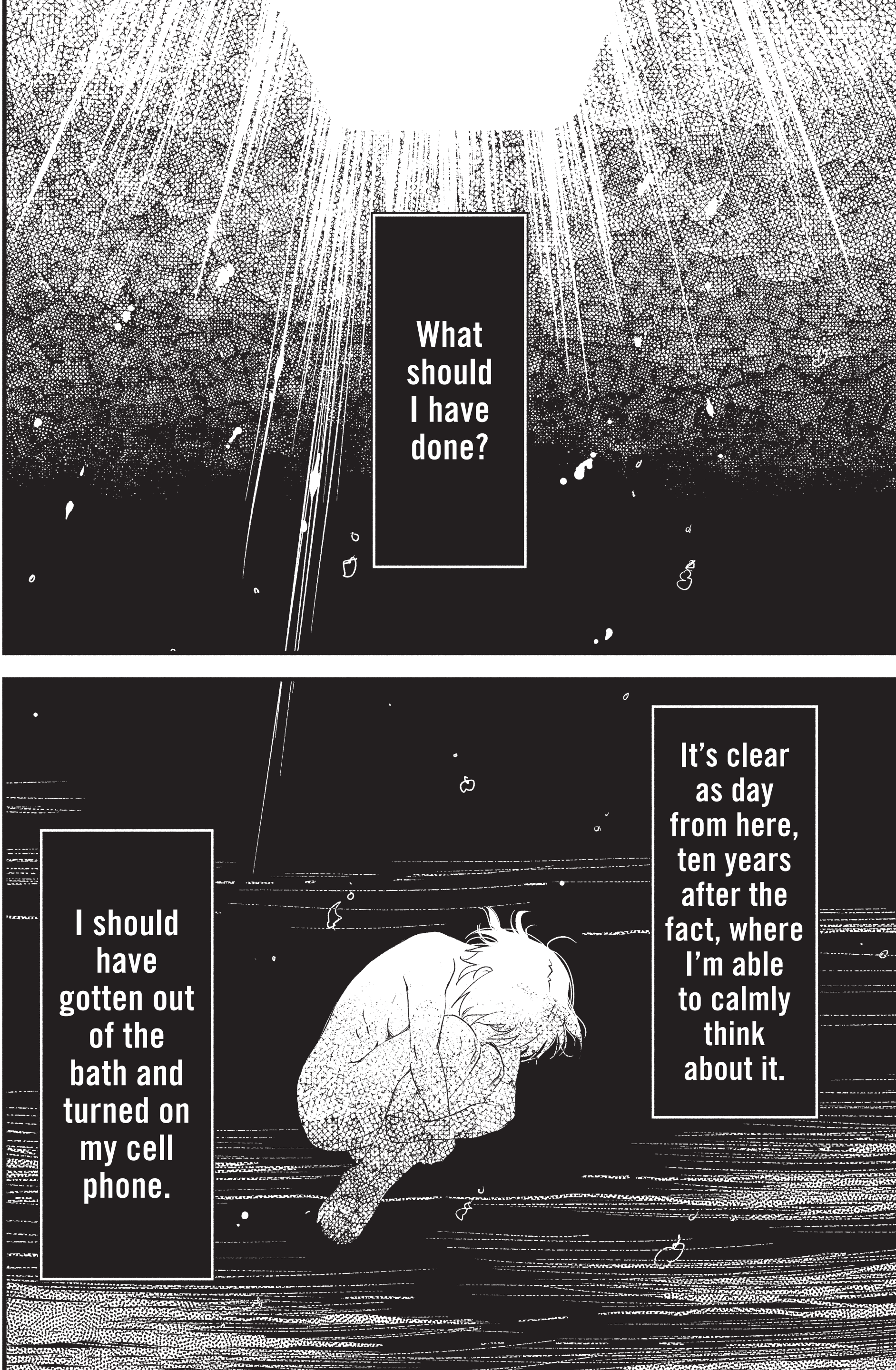
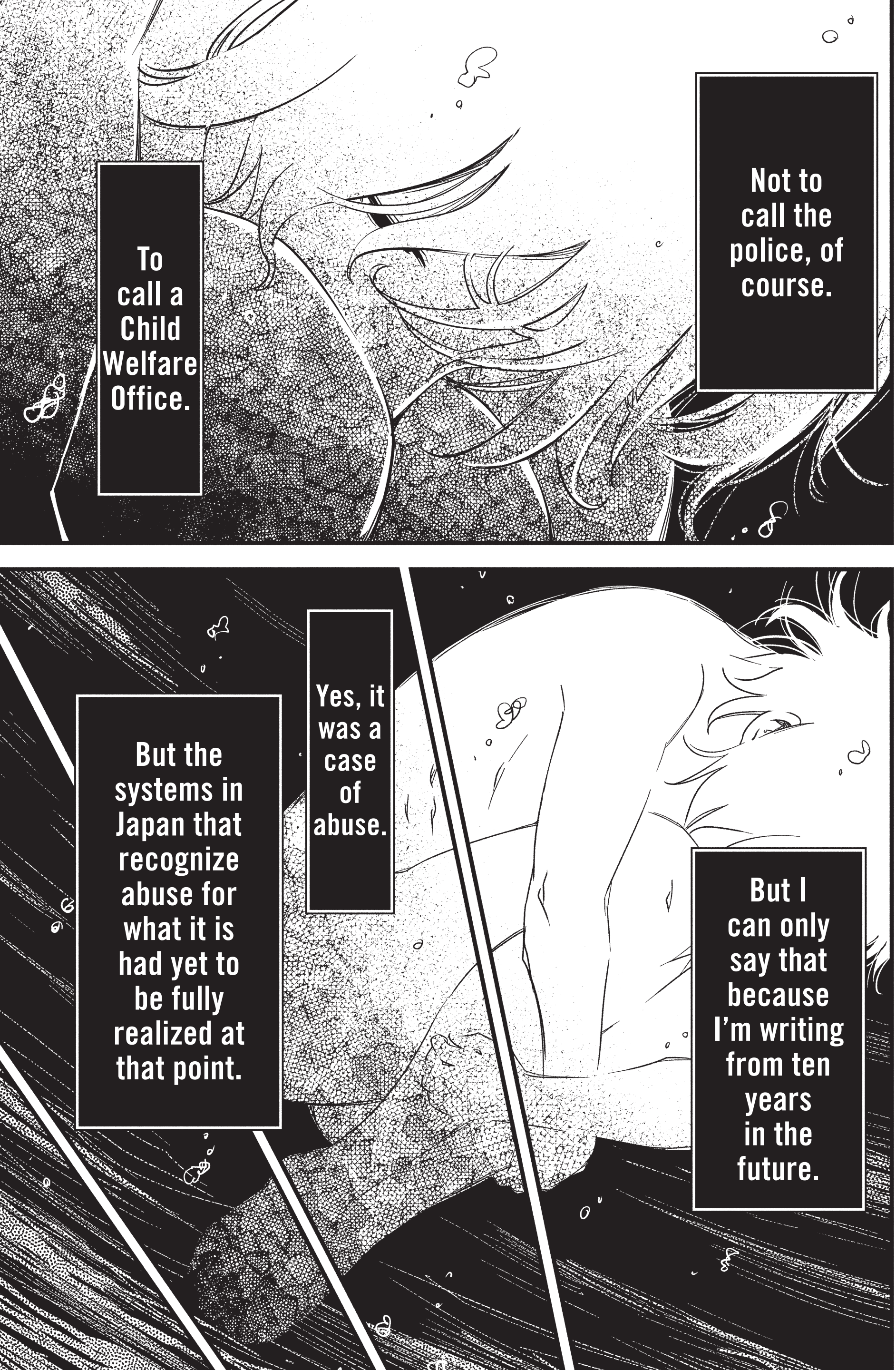
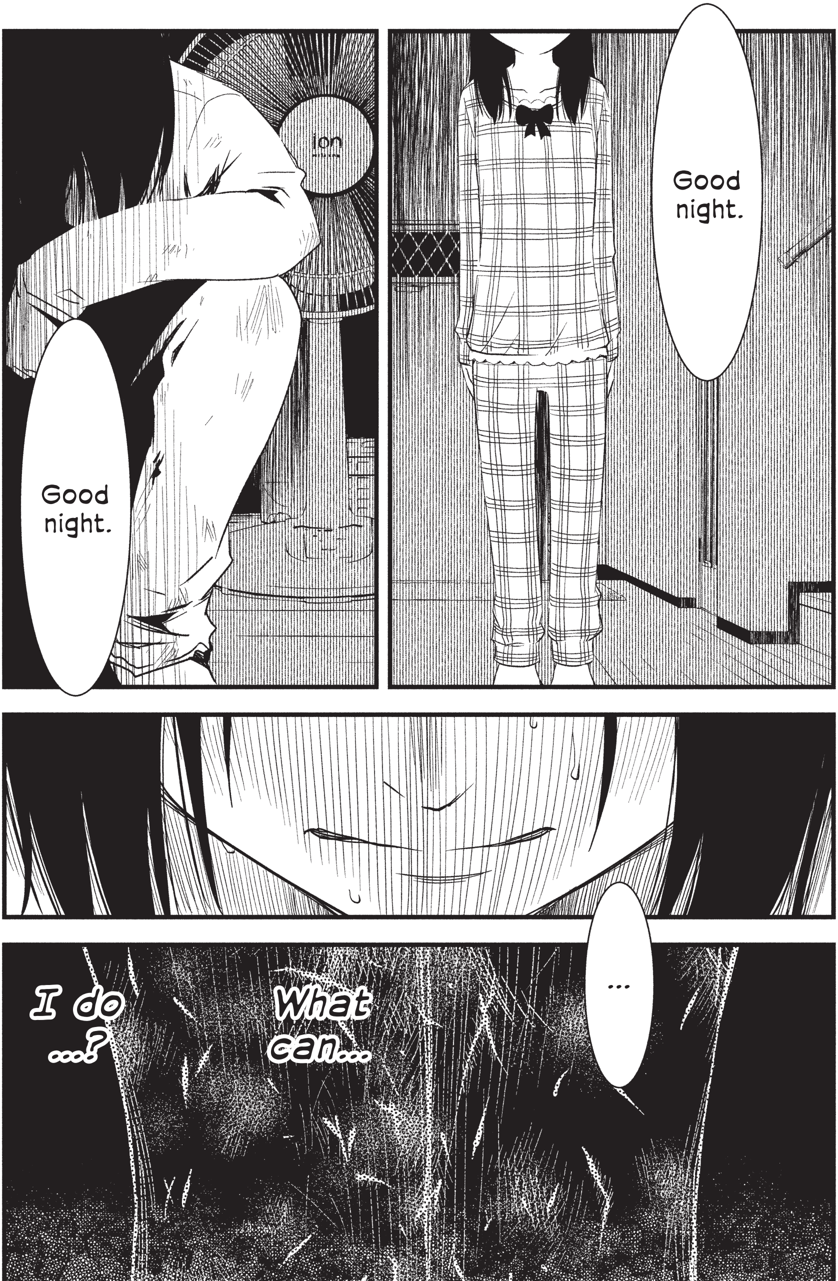
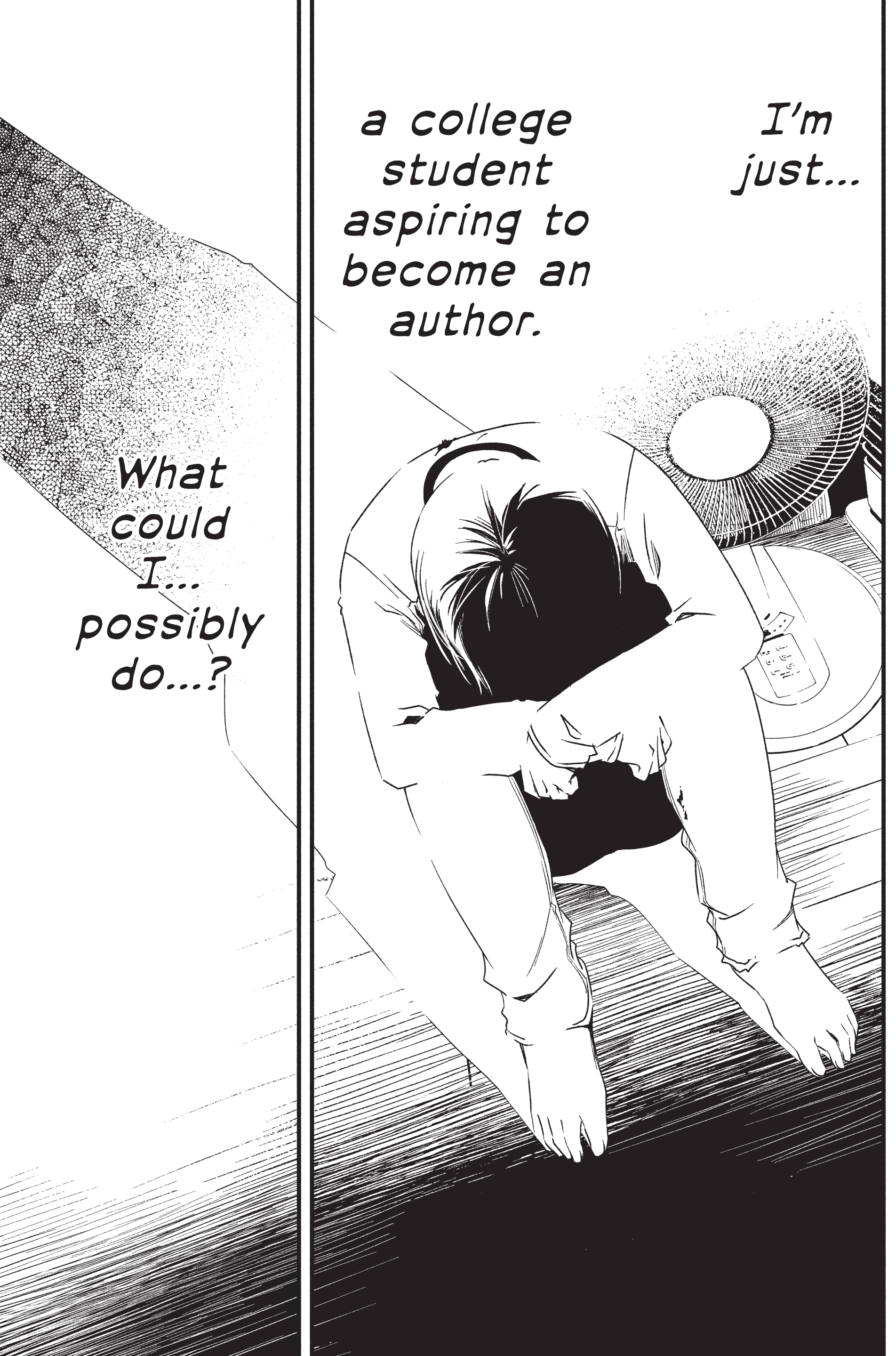
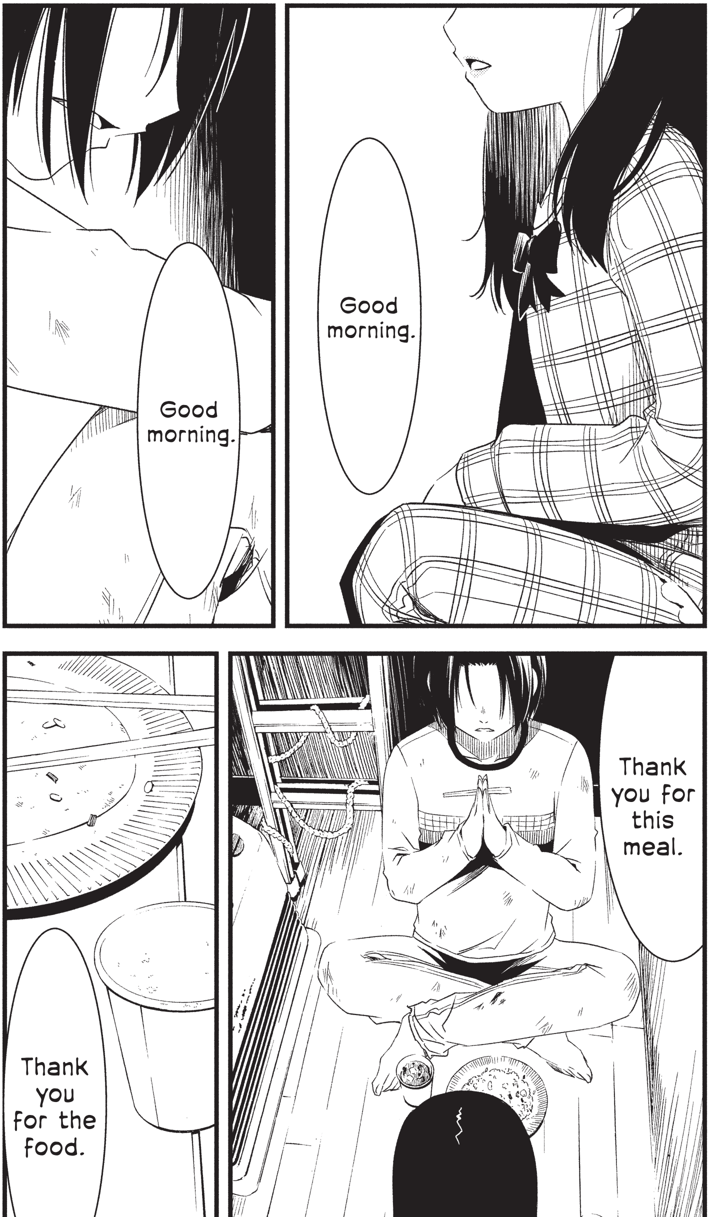

What should I have done?
It's clear as day from here, ten years after the fact, where I'm able to calmly think about it.
I should have gotten out of the bath and turned on my cell phone.

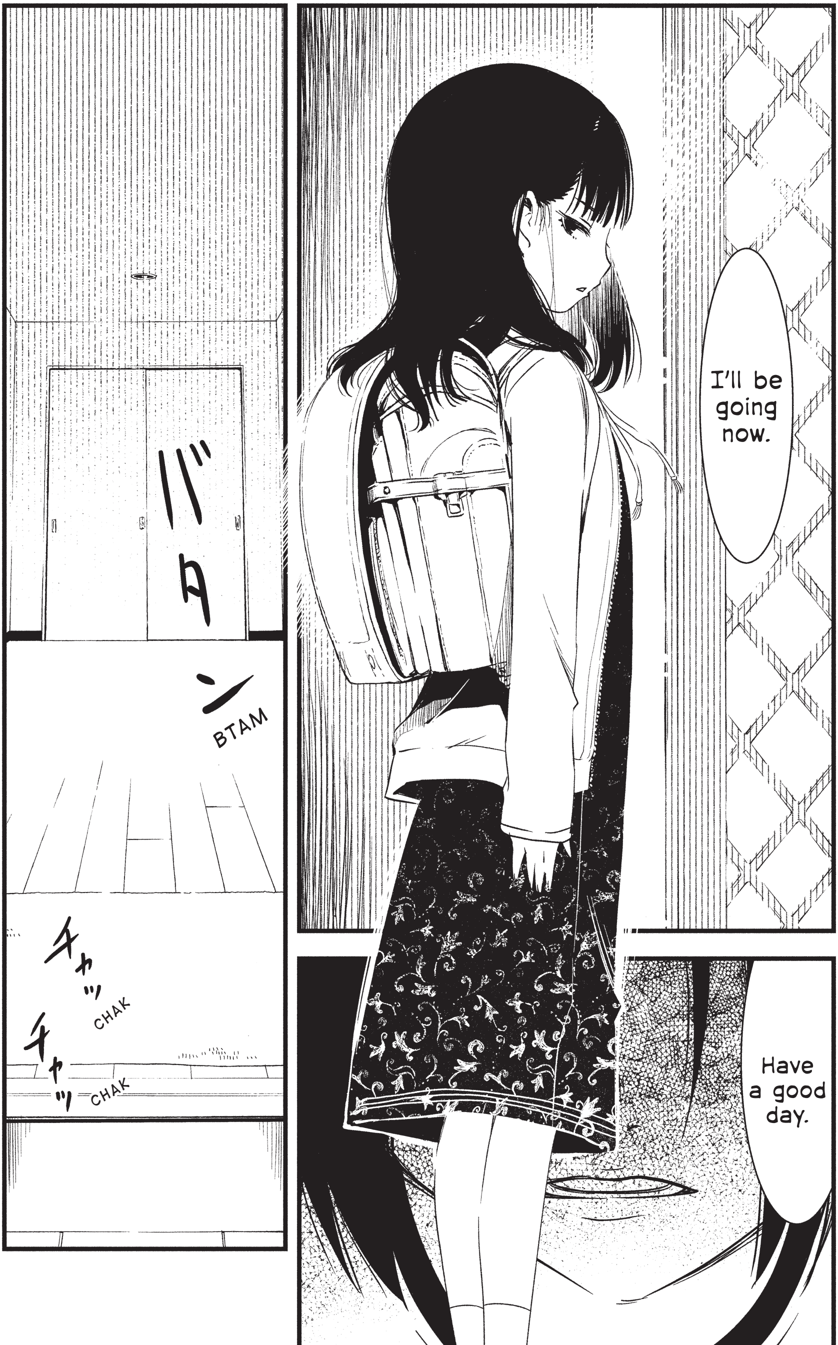

Not to call the police, of course.
To call a Child Welfare Office.
Yes, it was a case of abuse.
But the systems in Japan that recognize abuse for what it is had yet to be fully realized at that point.
But I can only say that because I'm writing from ten years in the future.

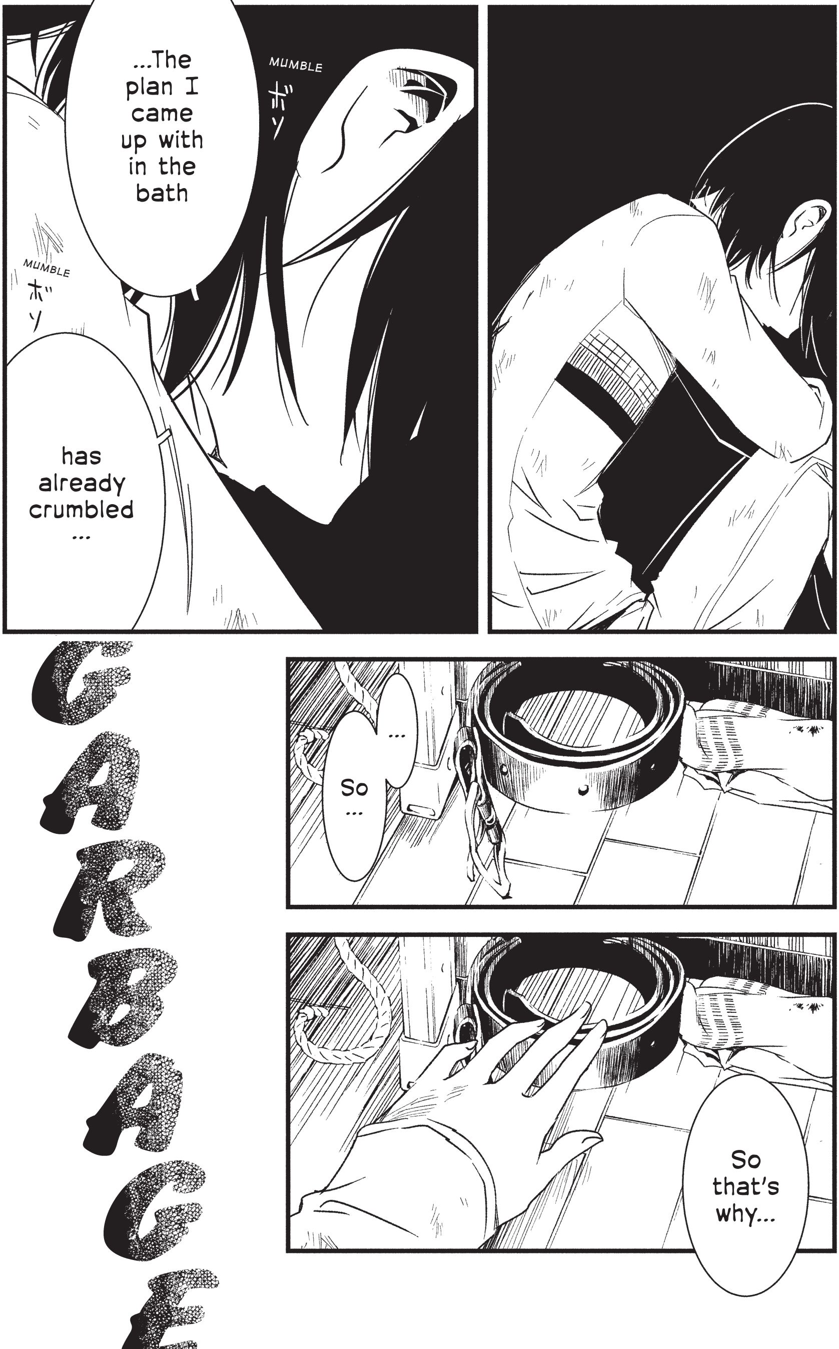

Good night.
ion
Good night.
…
What can…
I do …?

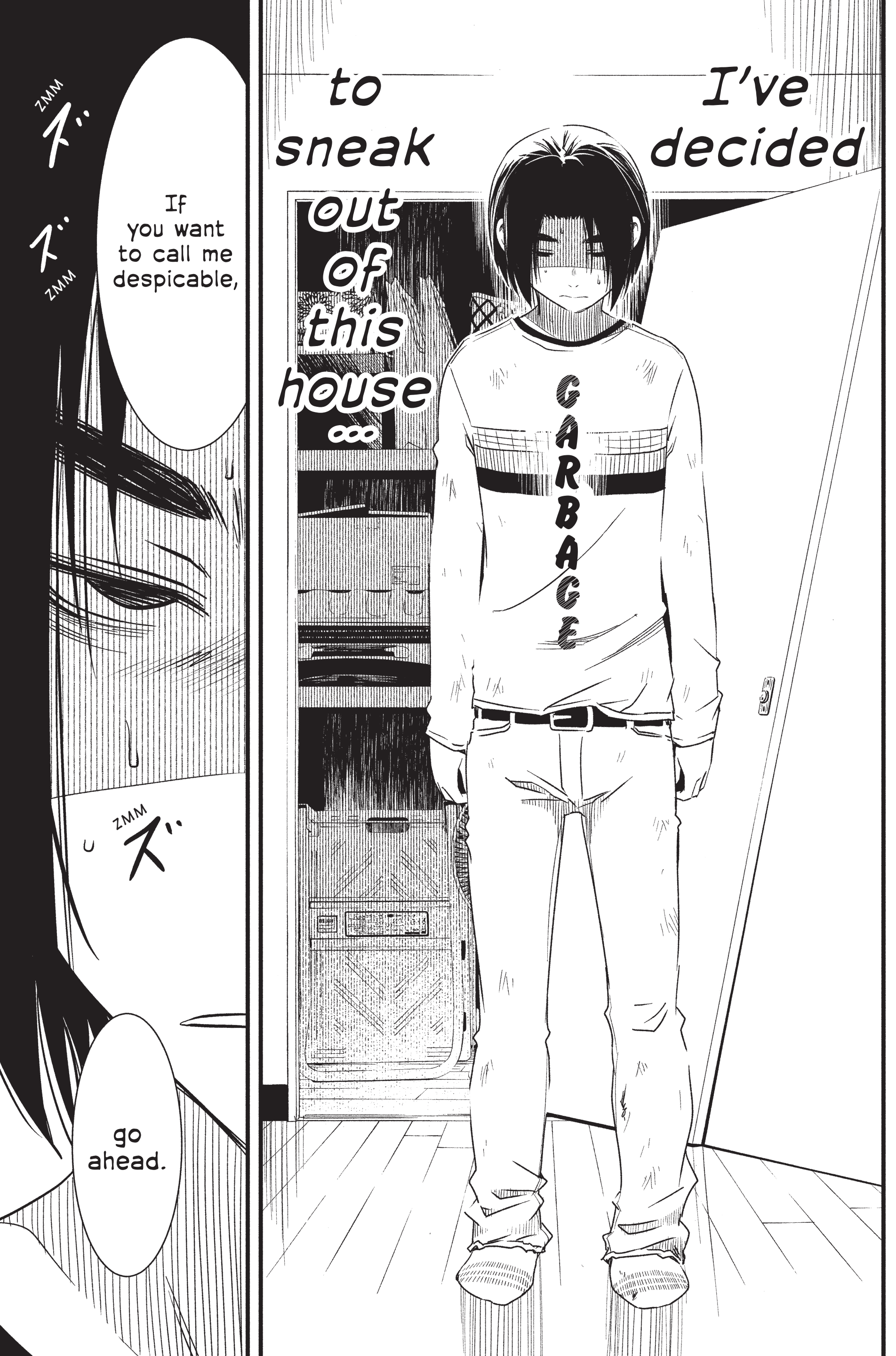

I'm just...
a college student aspiring to become an author.
What could I... possibly do...?

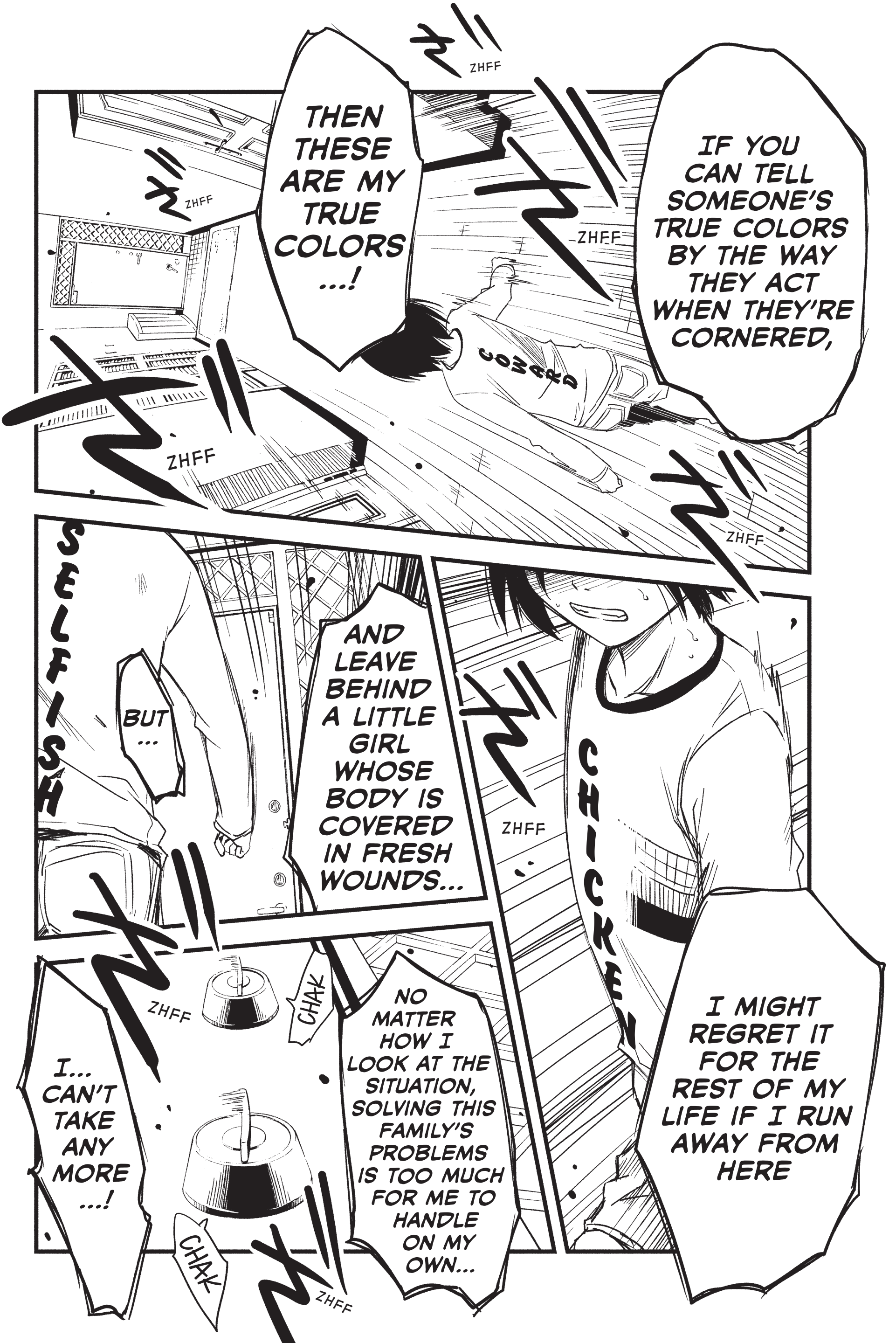
Day Six of Imprisonment

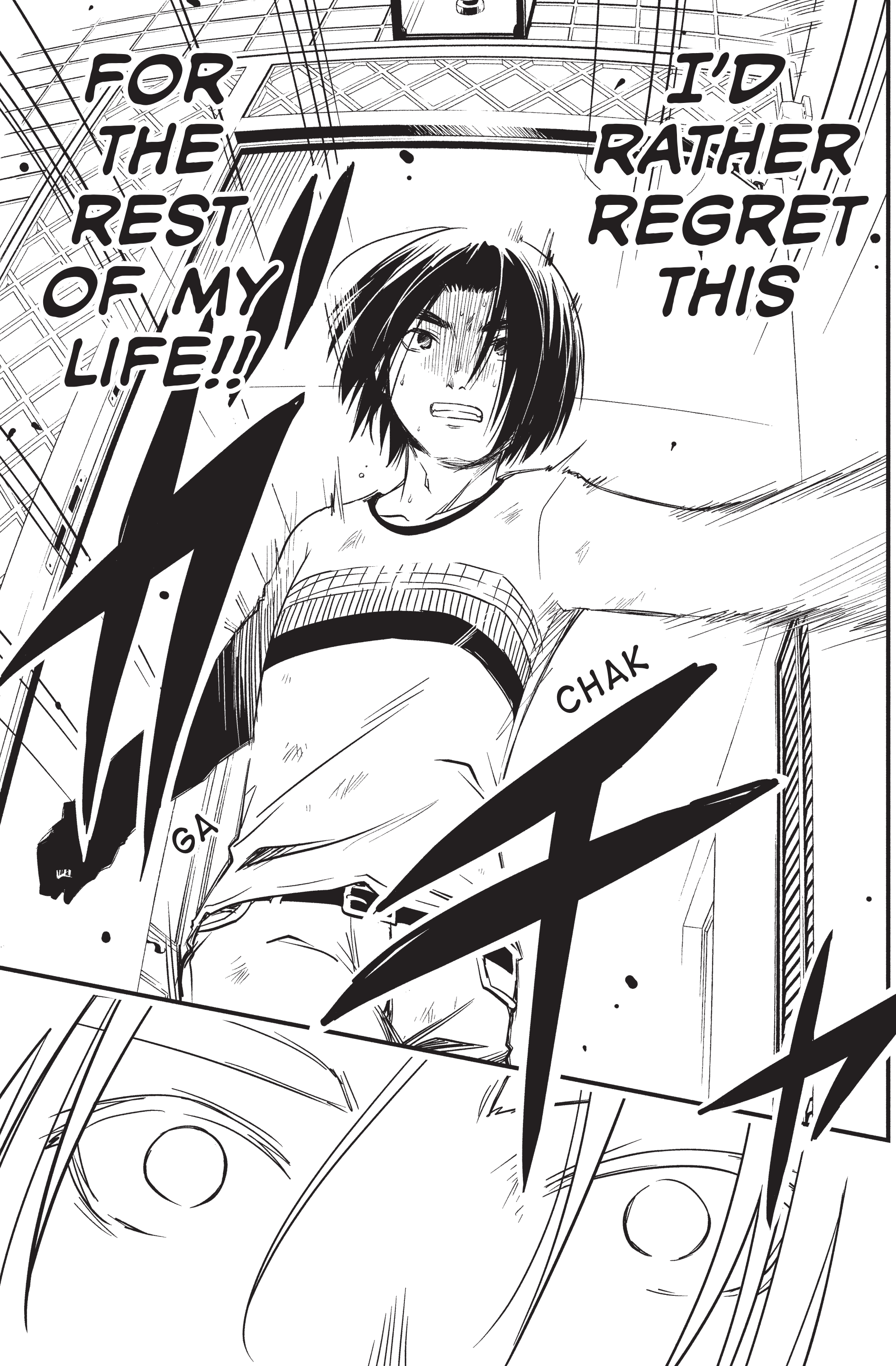

Good morning.
Good morning.
Thank you for this meal.
Thank you for the food.

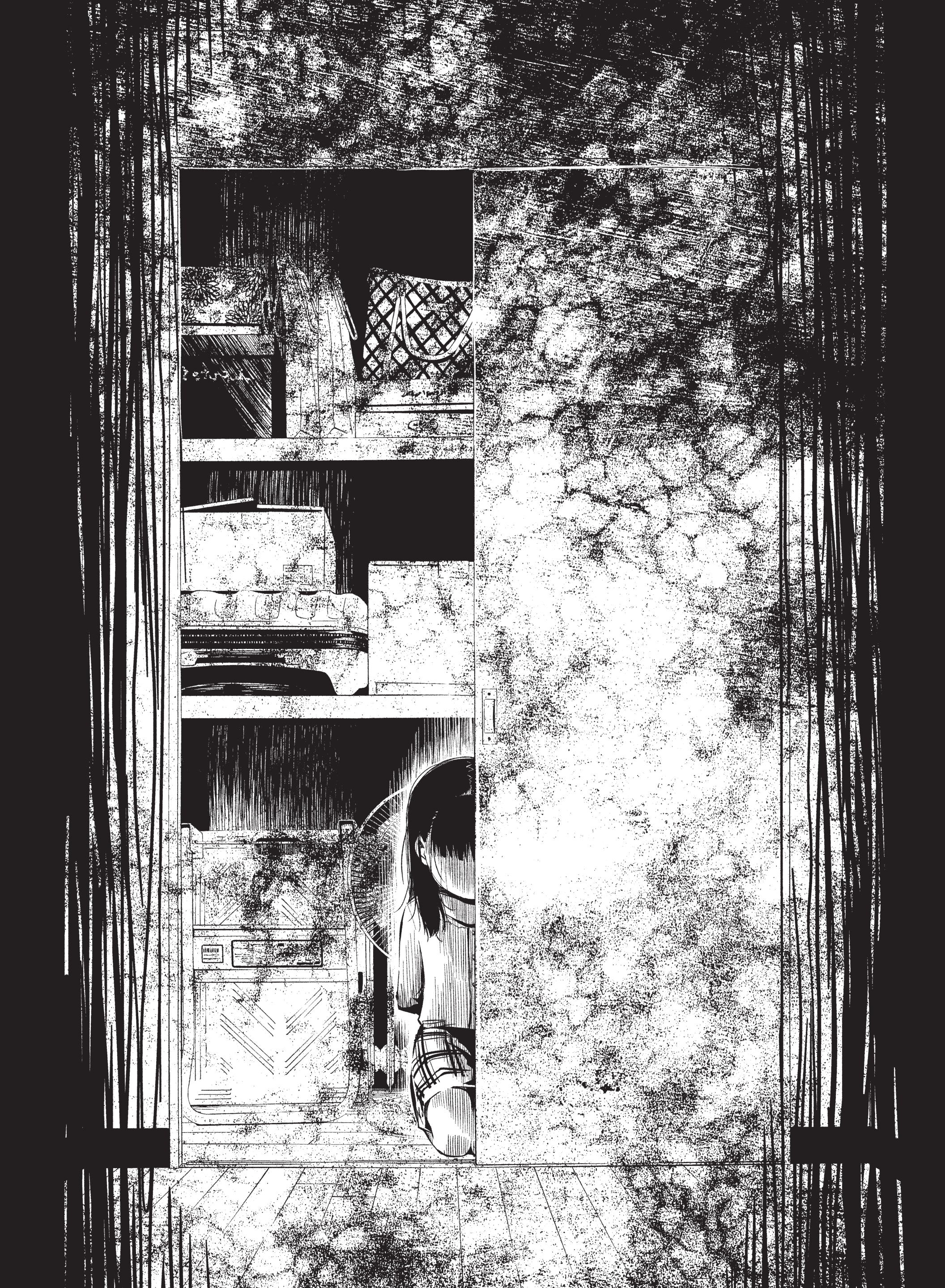

I'll be going now.
Have a good day.
バタン
BTAM
チャッ
CHAK
チャッ
CHAK

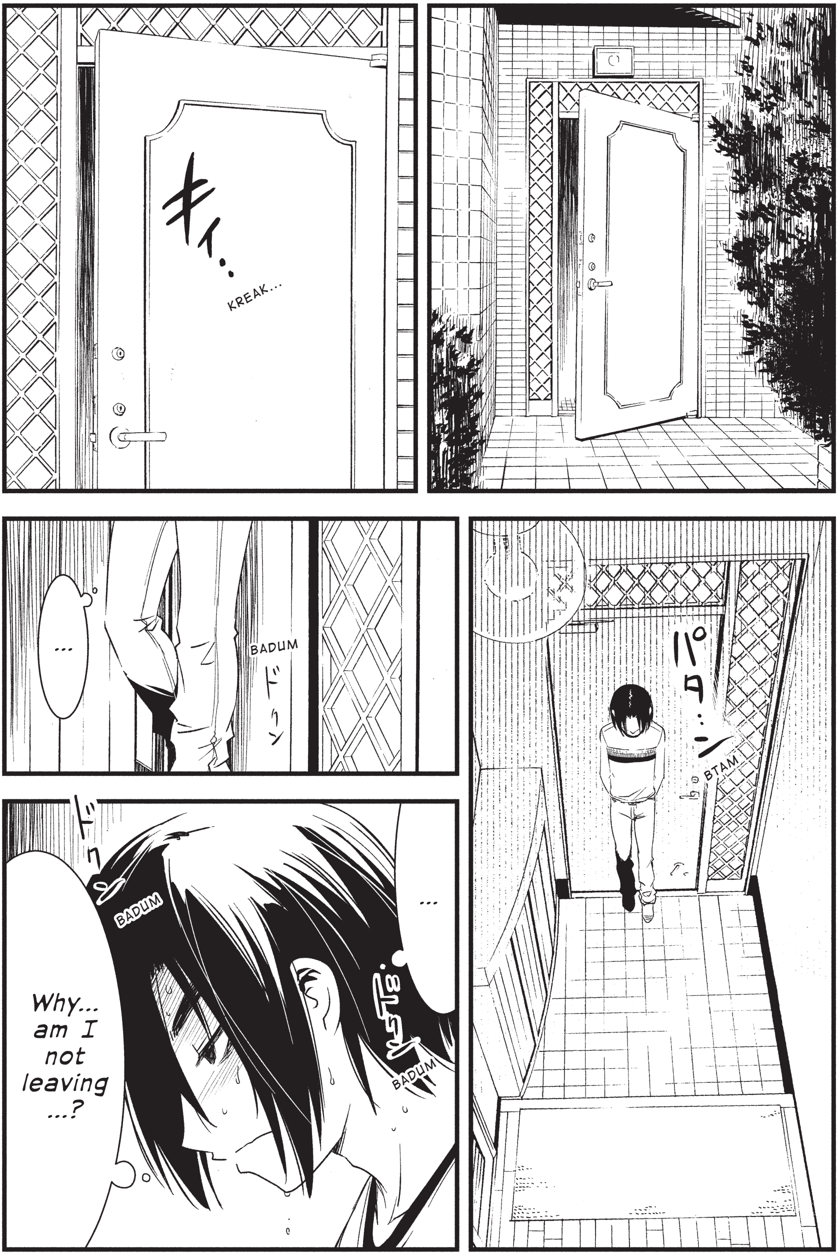

MUMBLE ボソ
...The plan I came up with in the bath
MUMBLE ボソ
has already crumbled ...
GARBAGE
... So ...
So that's why...

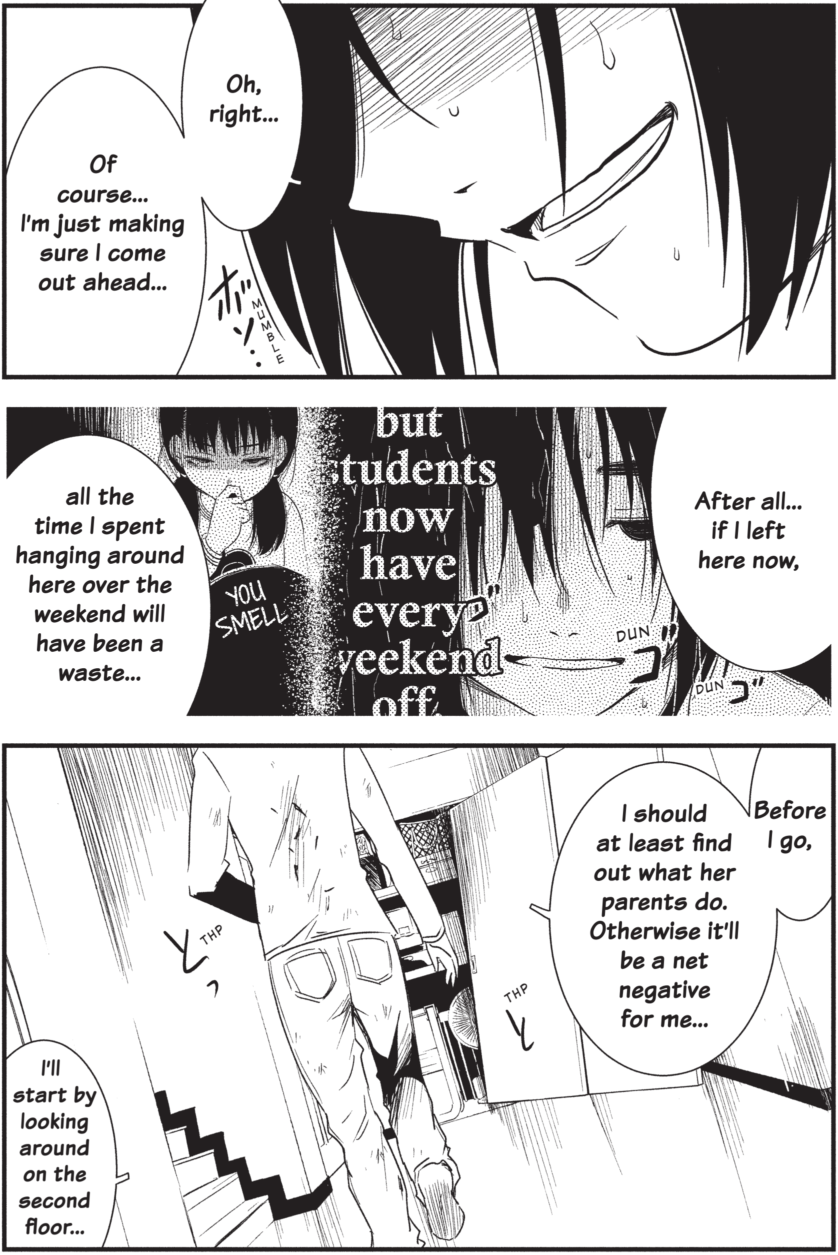

I've decided to sneak out of this house...
GARBAGE
ZMM ズ
ズ ZMM
If you want to call me despicable,
ZMM ズ
go ahead.

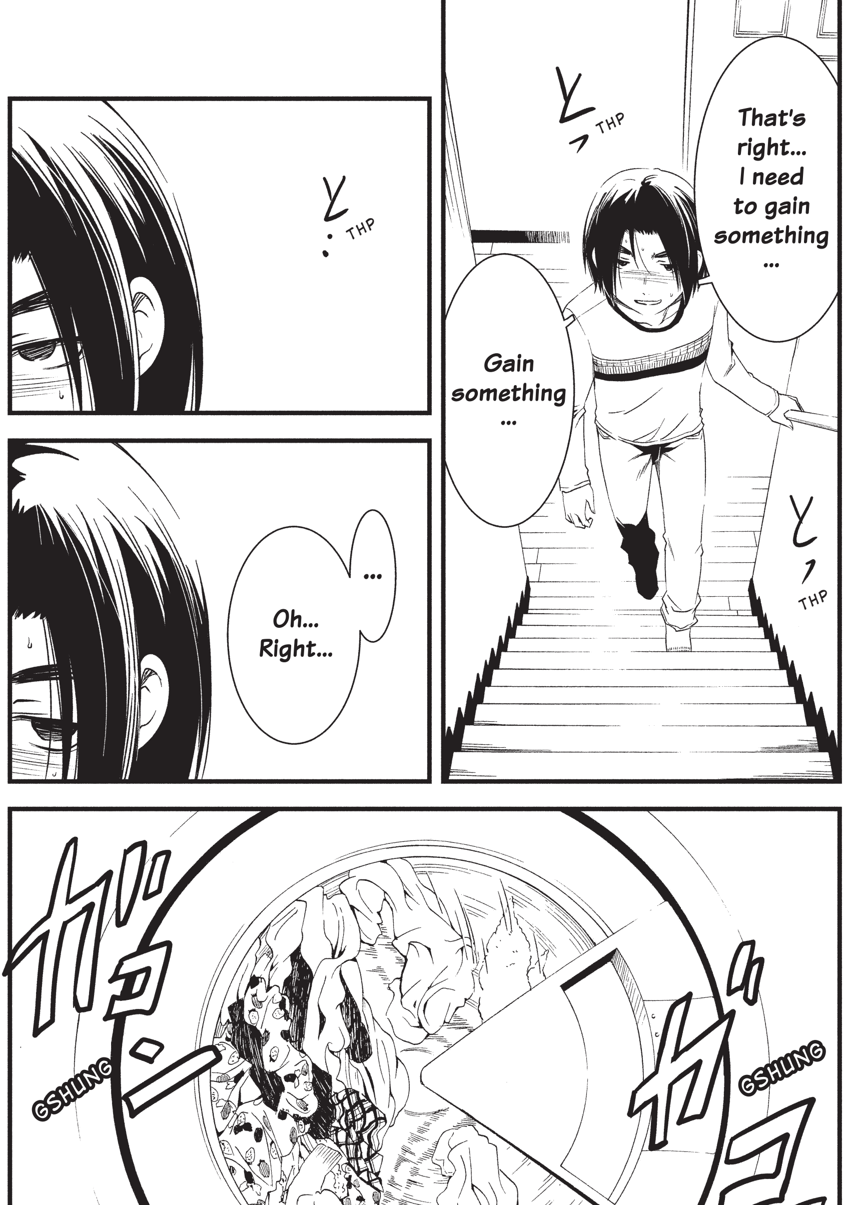

ZHFF
IF YOU CAN TELL SOMEONE'S TRUE COLORS BY THE WAY THEY ACT WHEN THEY'RE CORNERED,
THEN THESE ARE MY TRUE COLORS ...!
ZHFF
ZHFF
ZHFF
ZHFF
CHICKEN
I MIGHT REGRET IT FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE IF I RUN AWAY FROM HERE
ZHFF
AND LEAVE BEHIND A LITTLE GIRL WHOSE BODY IS COVERED IN FRESH WOUNDS...
BUT ...
SELFISH
CHAK
NO MATTER HOW I LOOK AT THE SITUATION, SOLVING THIS FAMILY'S PROBLEMS IS TOO MUCH FOR ME TO HANDLE ON MY OWN...
ZHFF
I... CAN'T TAKE ANY MORE ...!
CHAK
ZHFF

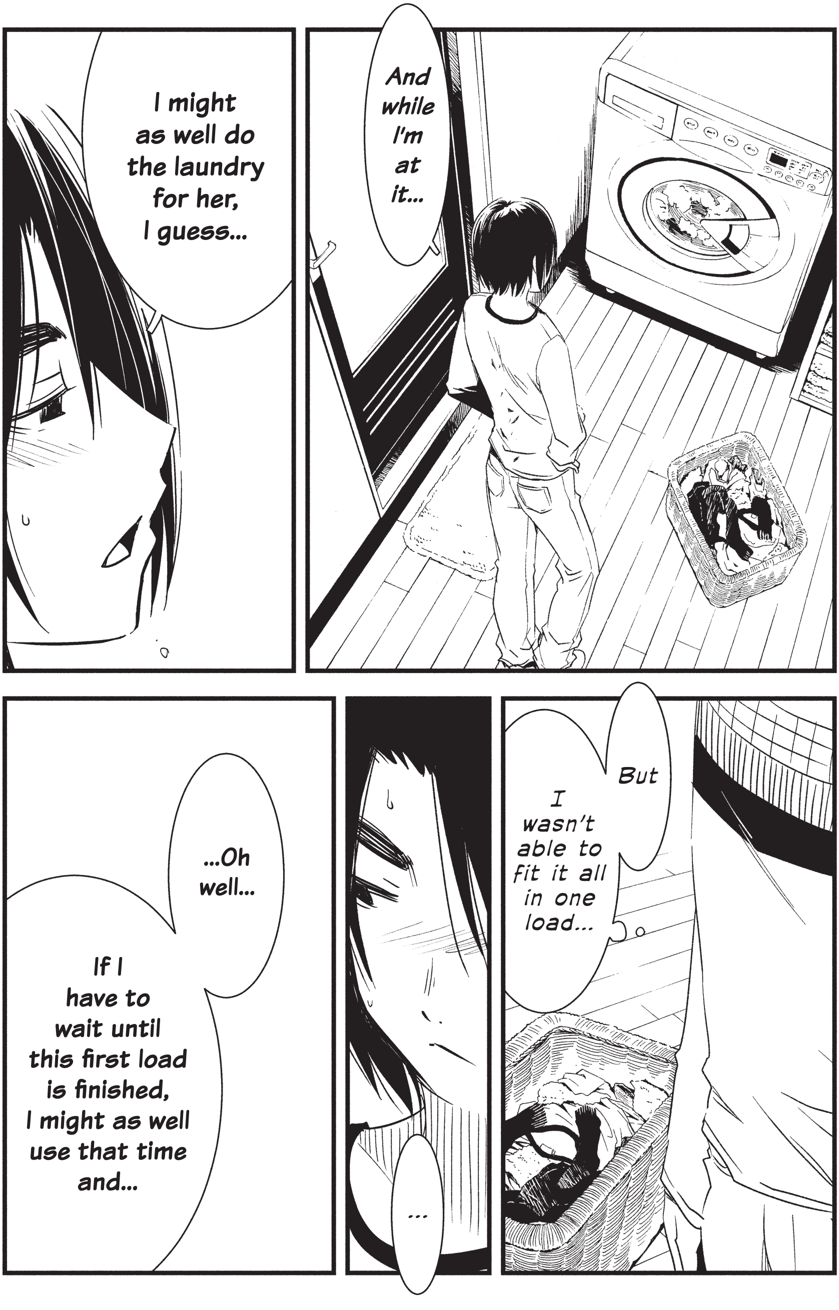

I'D RATHER REGRET THIS
FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE!!
CHAK
GA

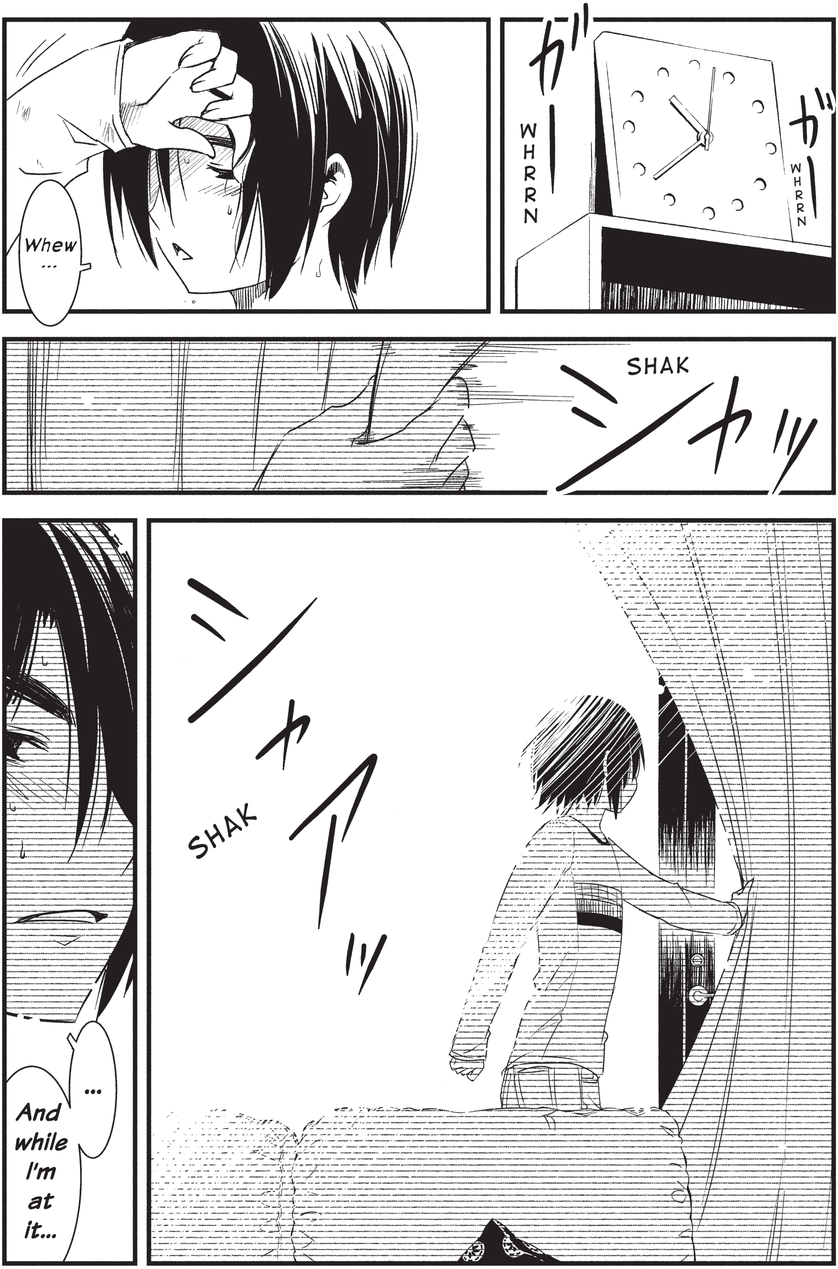


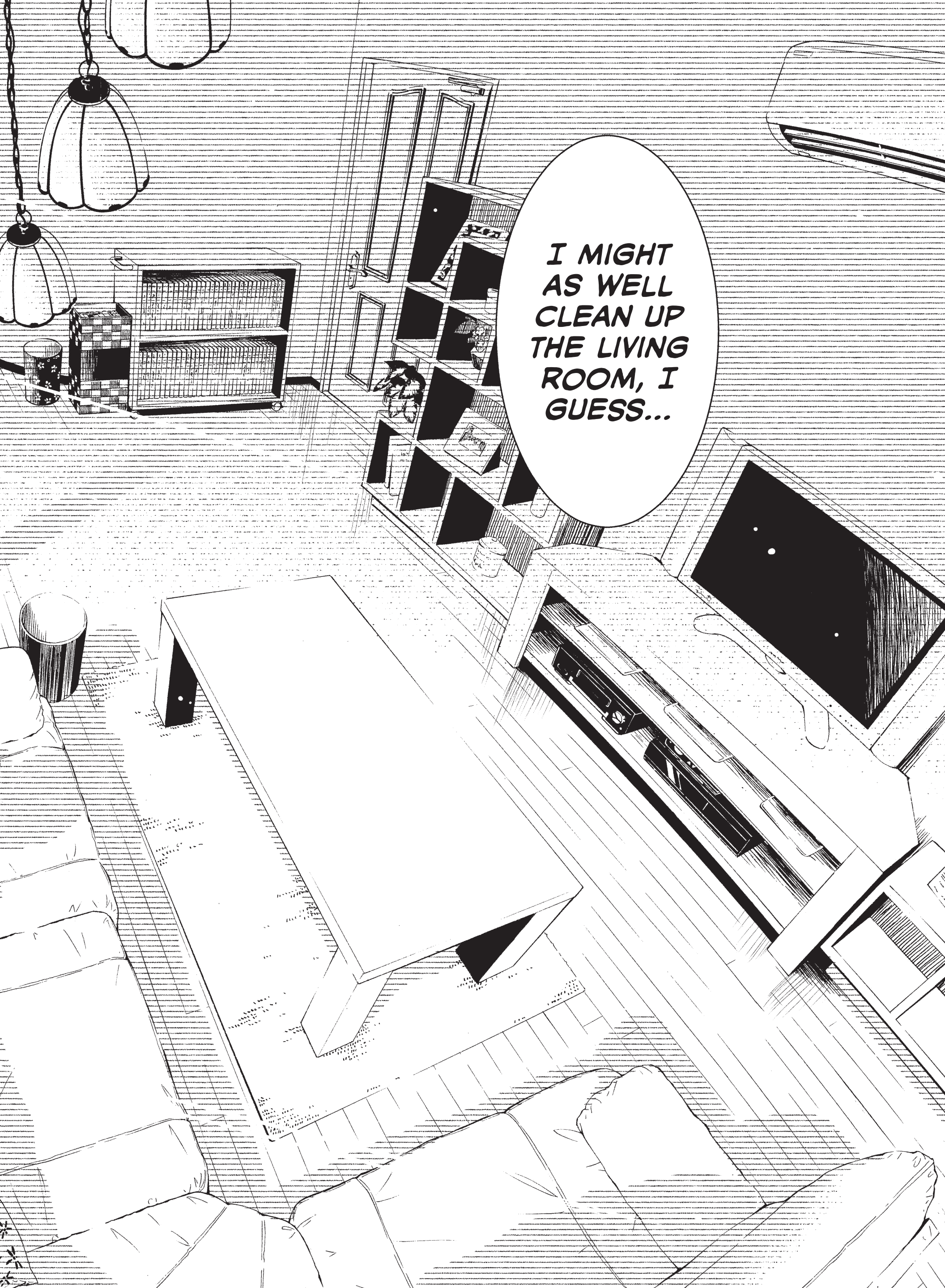

キイ…
KREAK...
パタ…ン
BTAM
…
BADUM
ドクン
ドクン
BADUM
…
ドクン
BADUM
Why... am I not leaving ...?

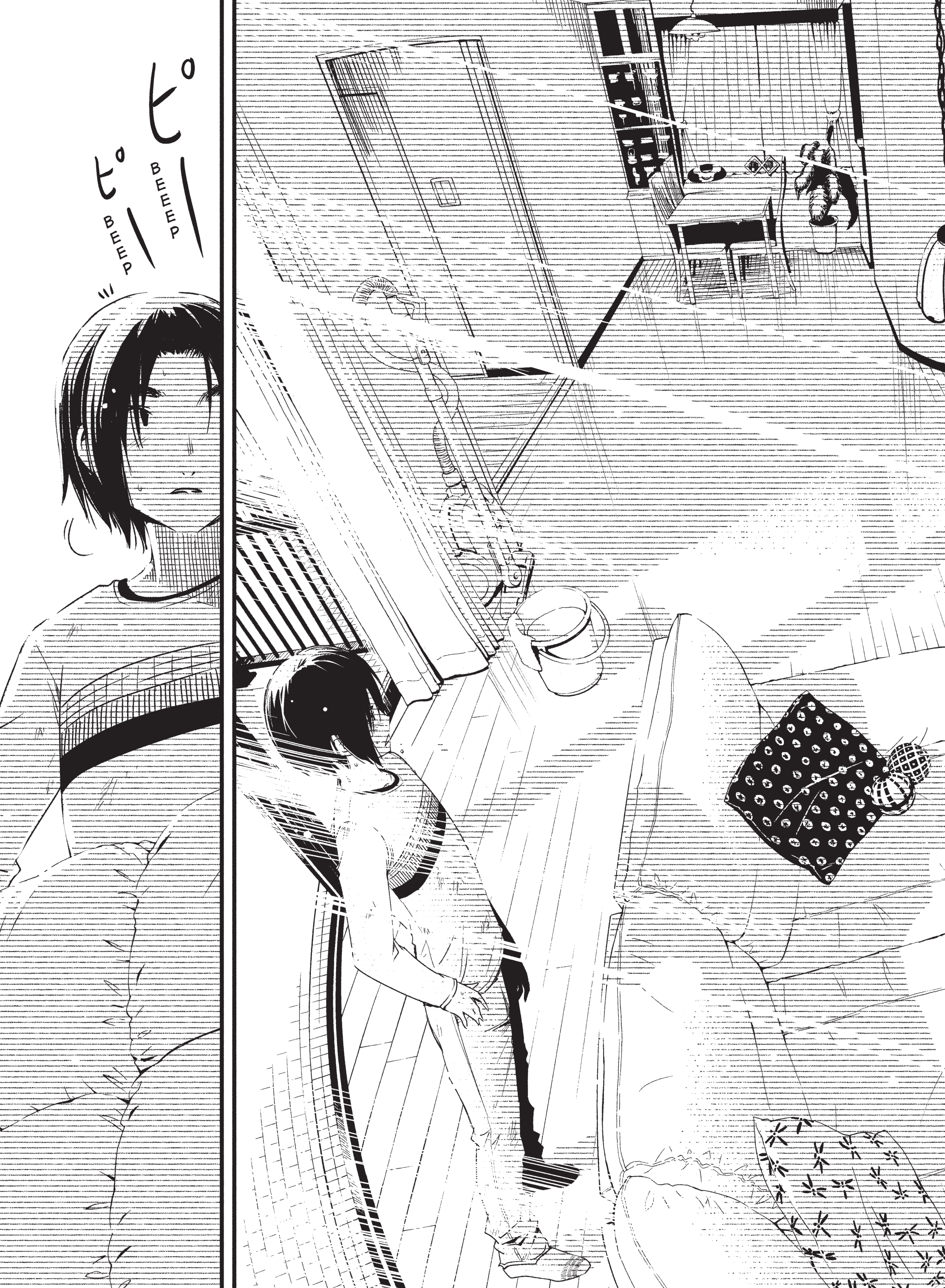

Oh, right...
Of course... I'm just making sure I come out ahead...
ボソ
MUMBLE
After all... if I left here now,
but students now have every weekend off,
DUN ゴッ
DUN ゴッ
all the time I spent hanging around here over the weekend will have been a waste...
YOU SMELL
Before I go,
I should at least find out what her parents do. Otherwise it'll be a net negative for me...
THP ソ
THP ソ
I'll start by looking around on the second floor...

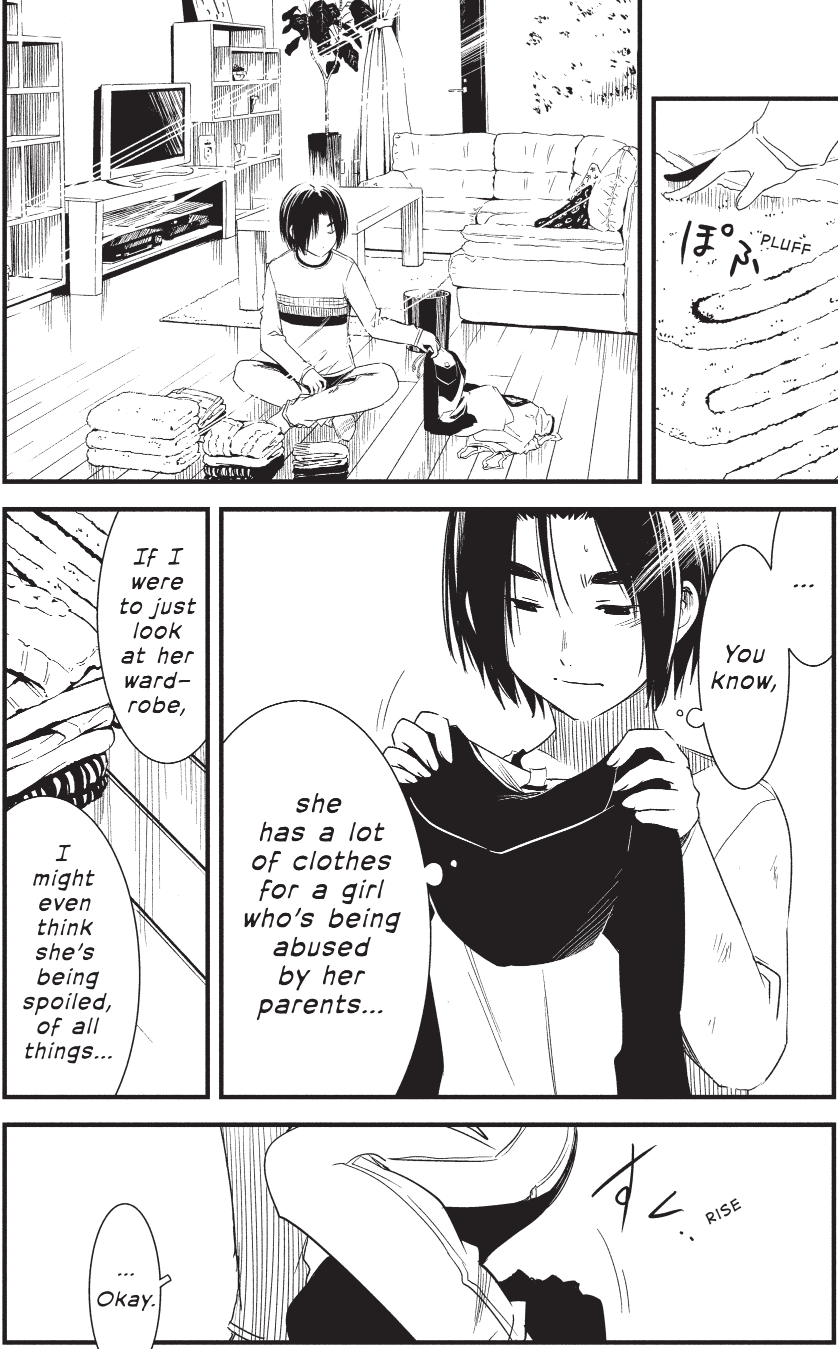

THP
That's right... I need to gain something...
Gain something...
THP
THP
...
Oh... Right...
GSHUNG
GSHUNG

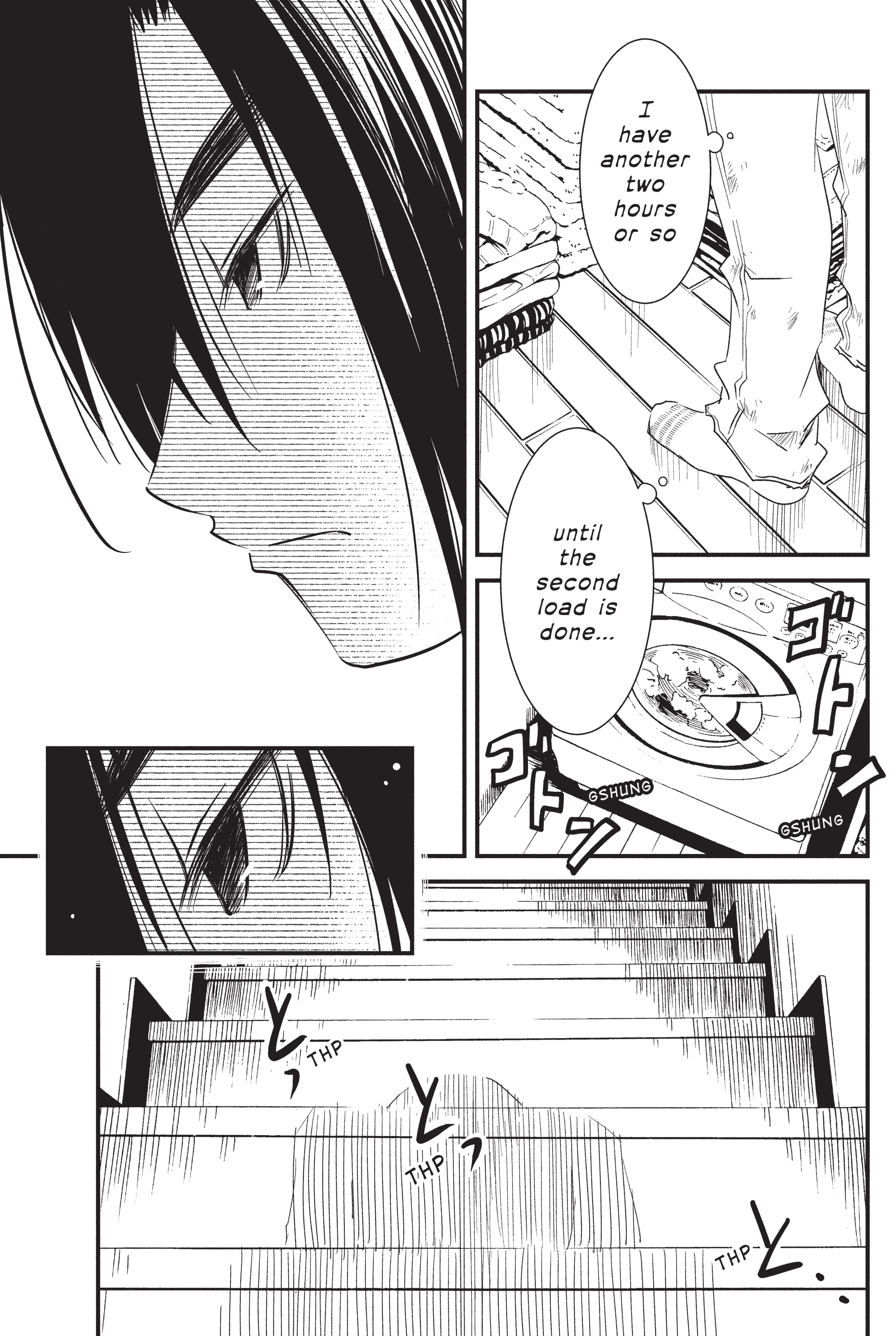

And while I'm at it...
I might as well do the laundry for her, I guess...
But I wasn't able to fit it all in one load...
...
...Oh well...
If I have to wait until this first load is finished, I might as well use that time and...

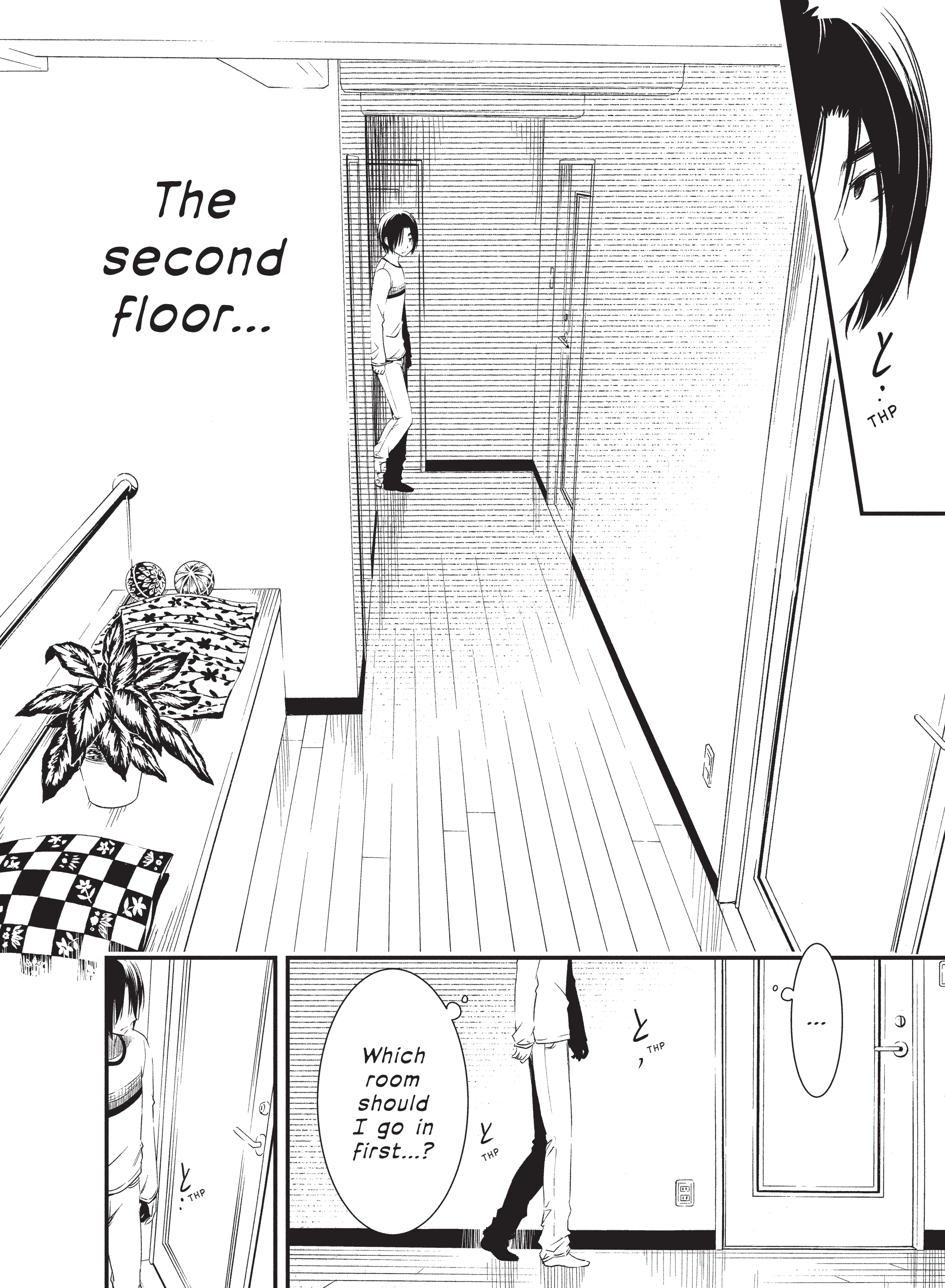

ガー
WHRRN
ガー
WHRRN
Whew ...
シャッ
SHAK
シャアッ
SHAK
... And while I'm at it...

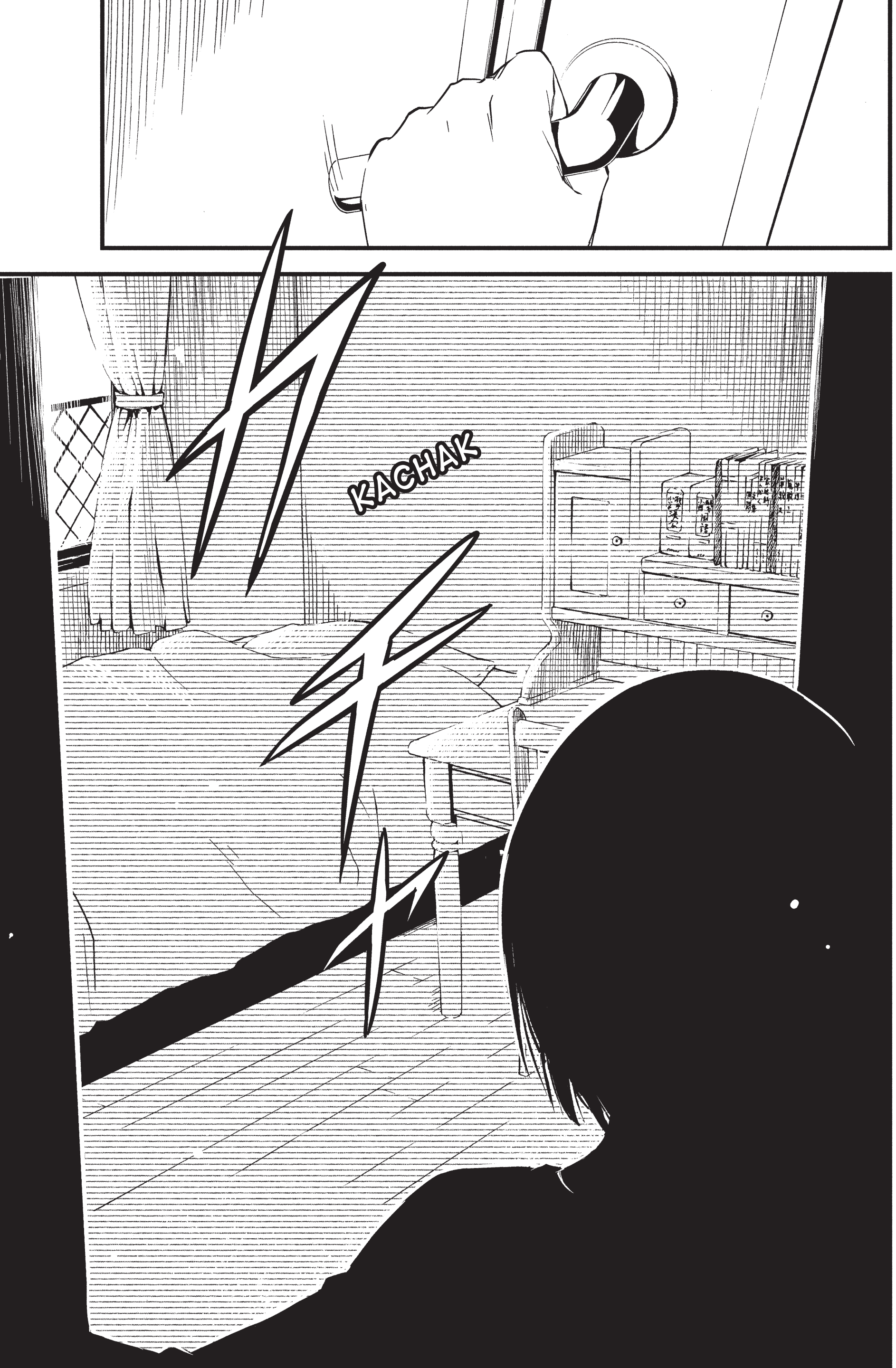

I MIGHT AS WELL CLEAN UP THE LIVING ROOM, I GUESS...


ピー
BEEEEP
ピ
BEEP


ぽふ PLUFF
... You know,
she has a lot of clothes for a girl who's being abused by her parents...
If I were to just look at her wardrobe,
I might even think she's being spoiled, of all things...
すく.. RISE
... Okay.

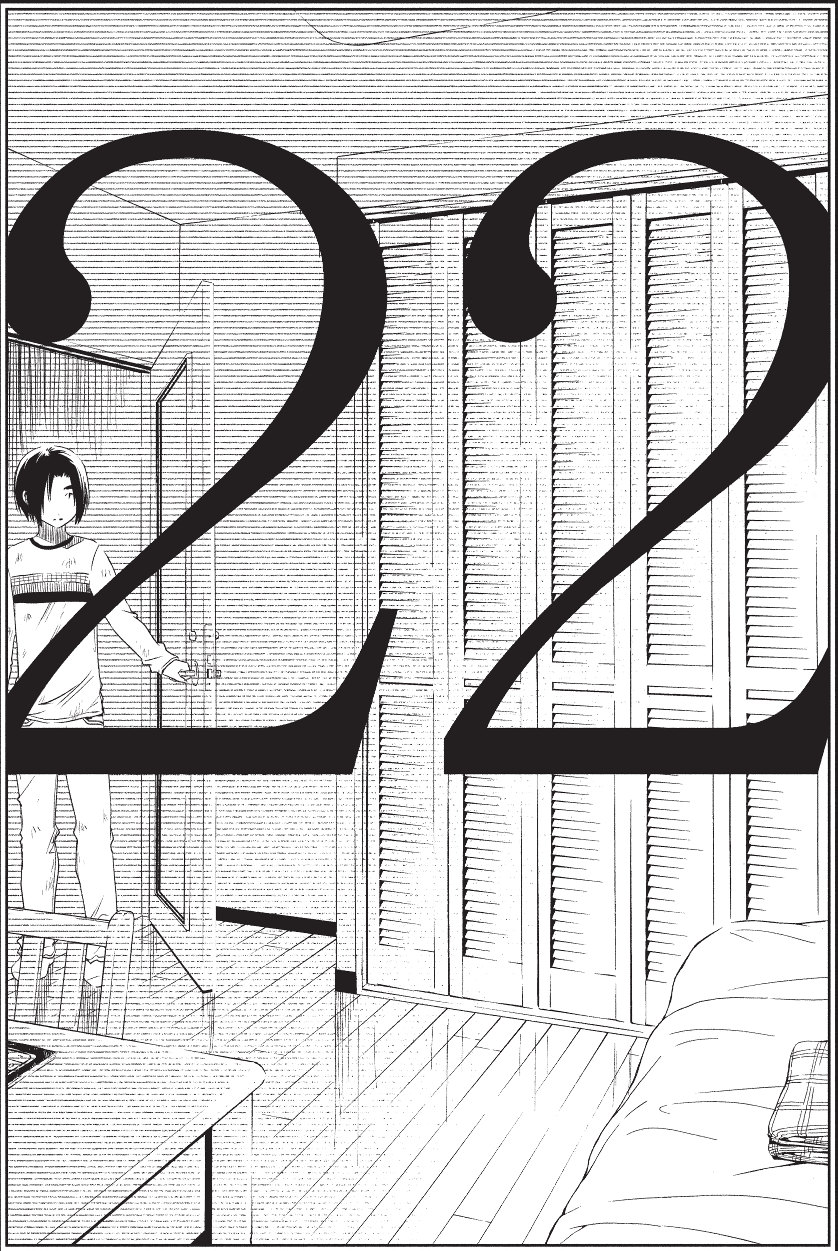

I have another two hours or so
until the second load is done...
ゴトン
ゴトン
GSHUNG
GSHUNG
どっ
THP
どっ
THP
どっ
THP-

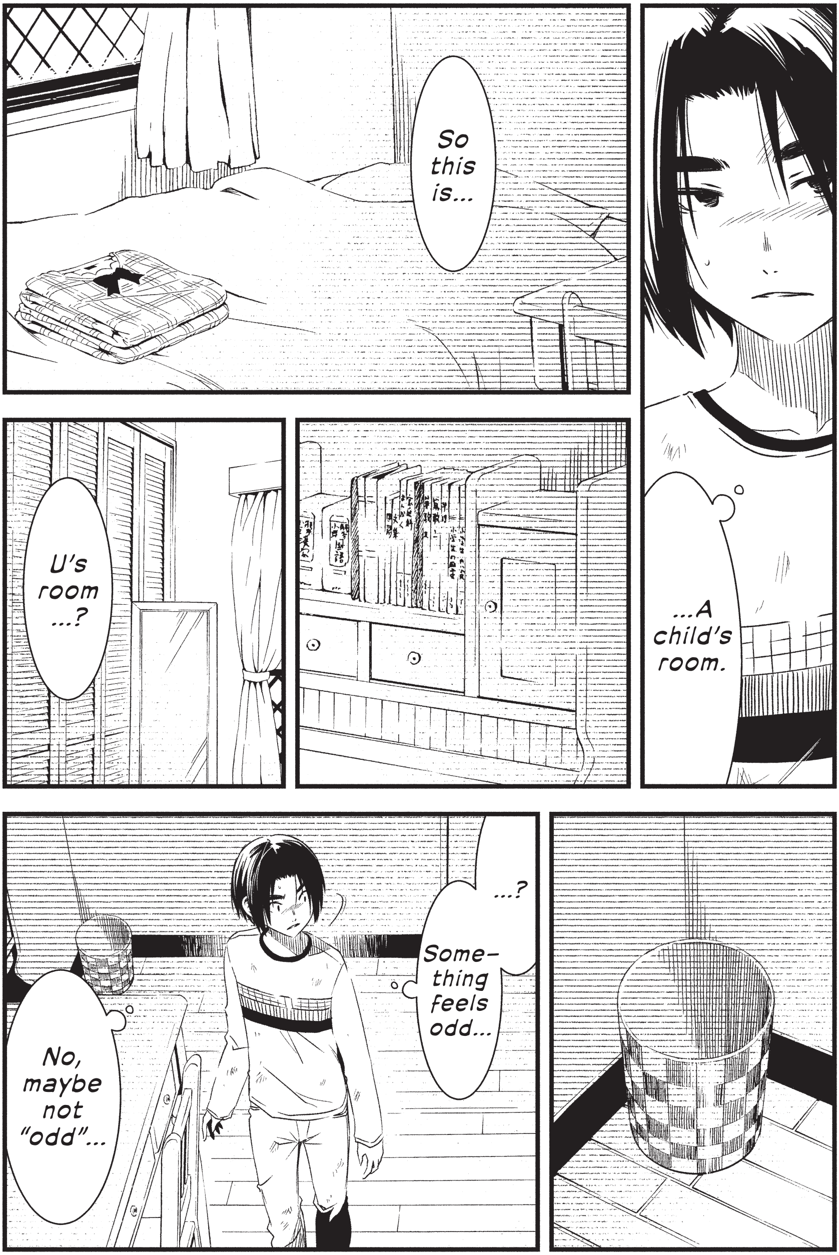

THP
The second floor...
...
THP
THP
Which room should I go in first...?
THP

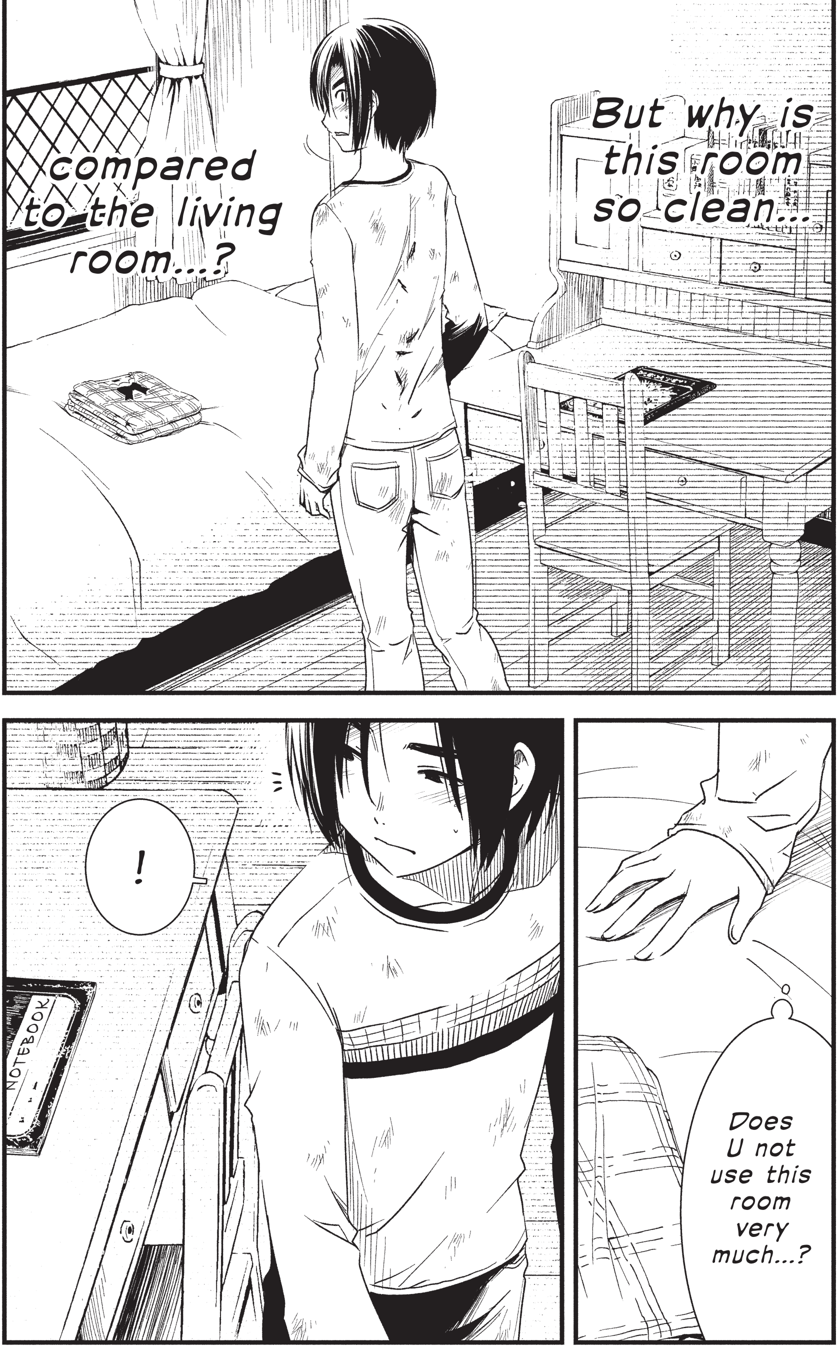

KACHAK

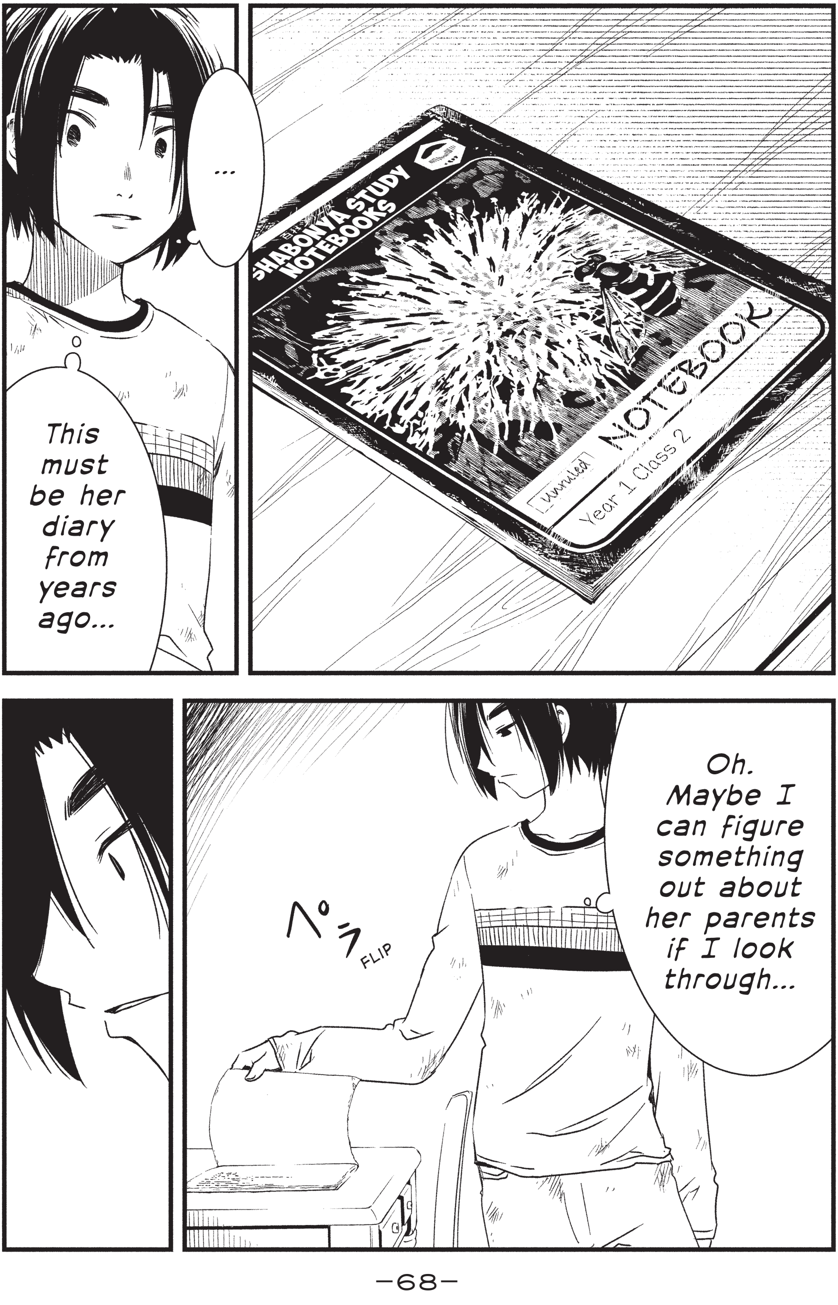
22

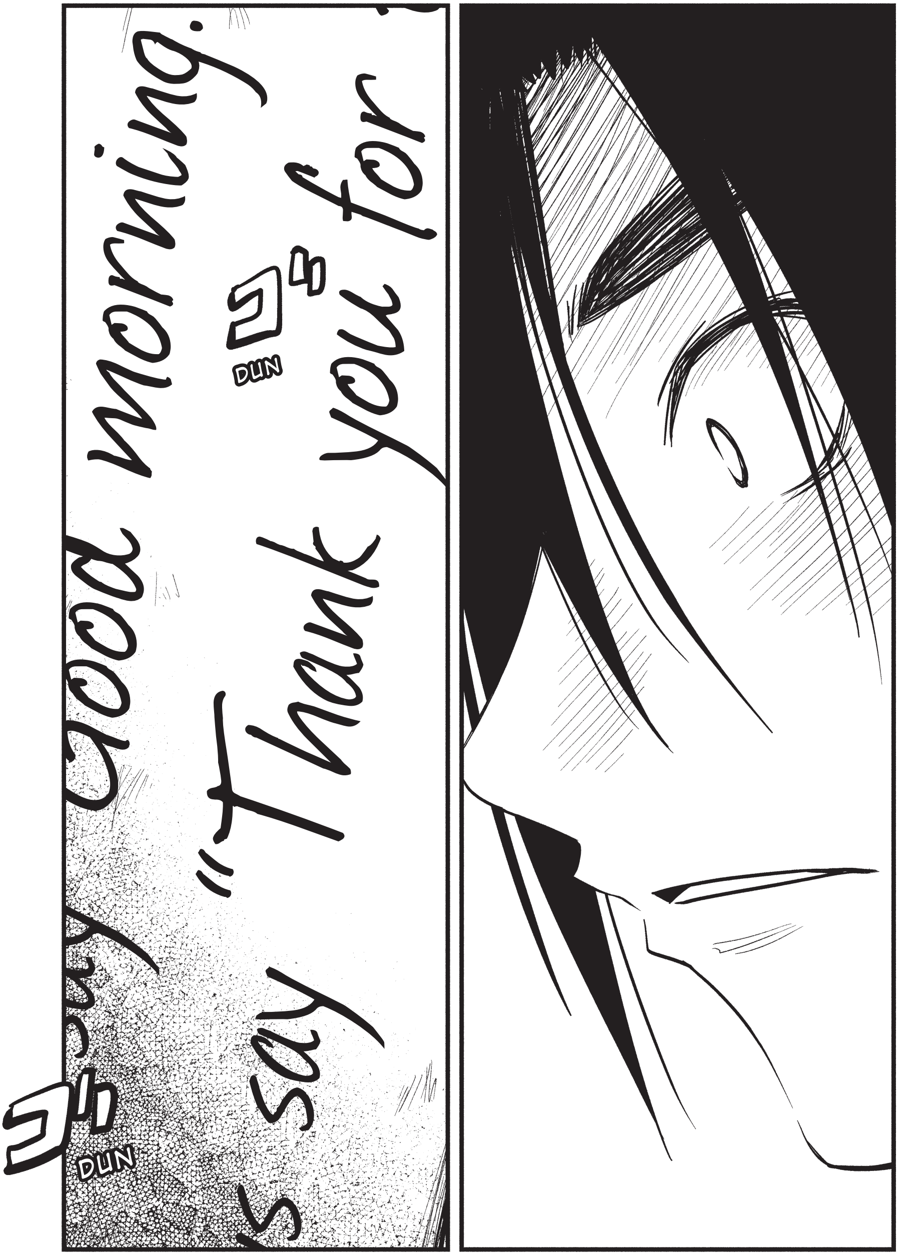
22

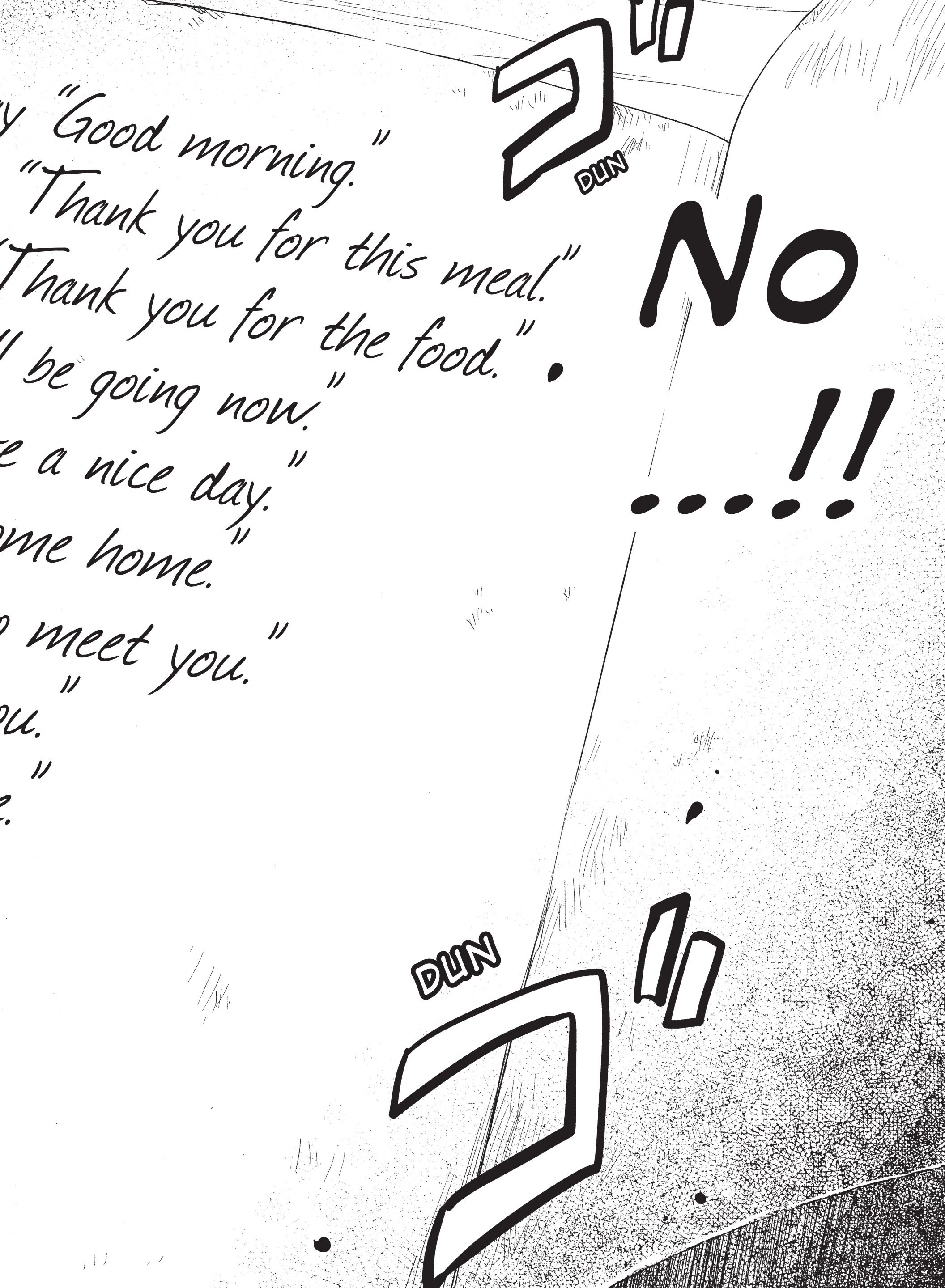


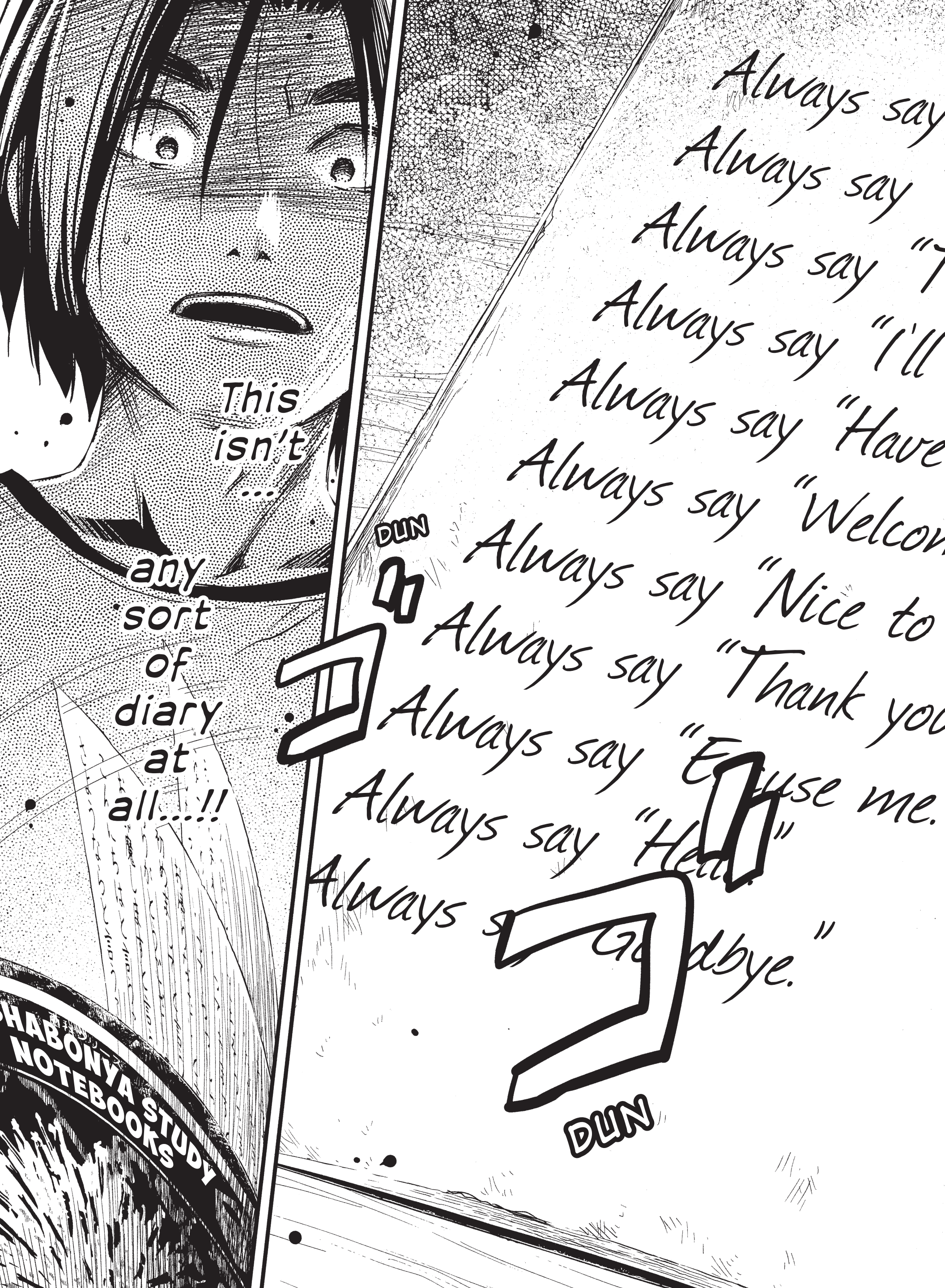

So this is...
U's room ...?
...A child's room.
...?
Some-thing feels odd...
No, maybe not "odd"...

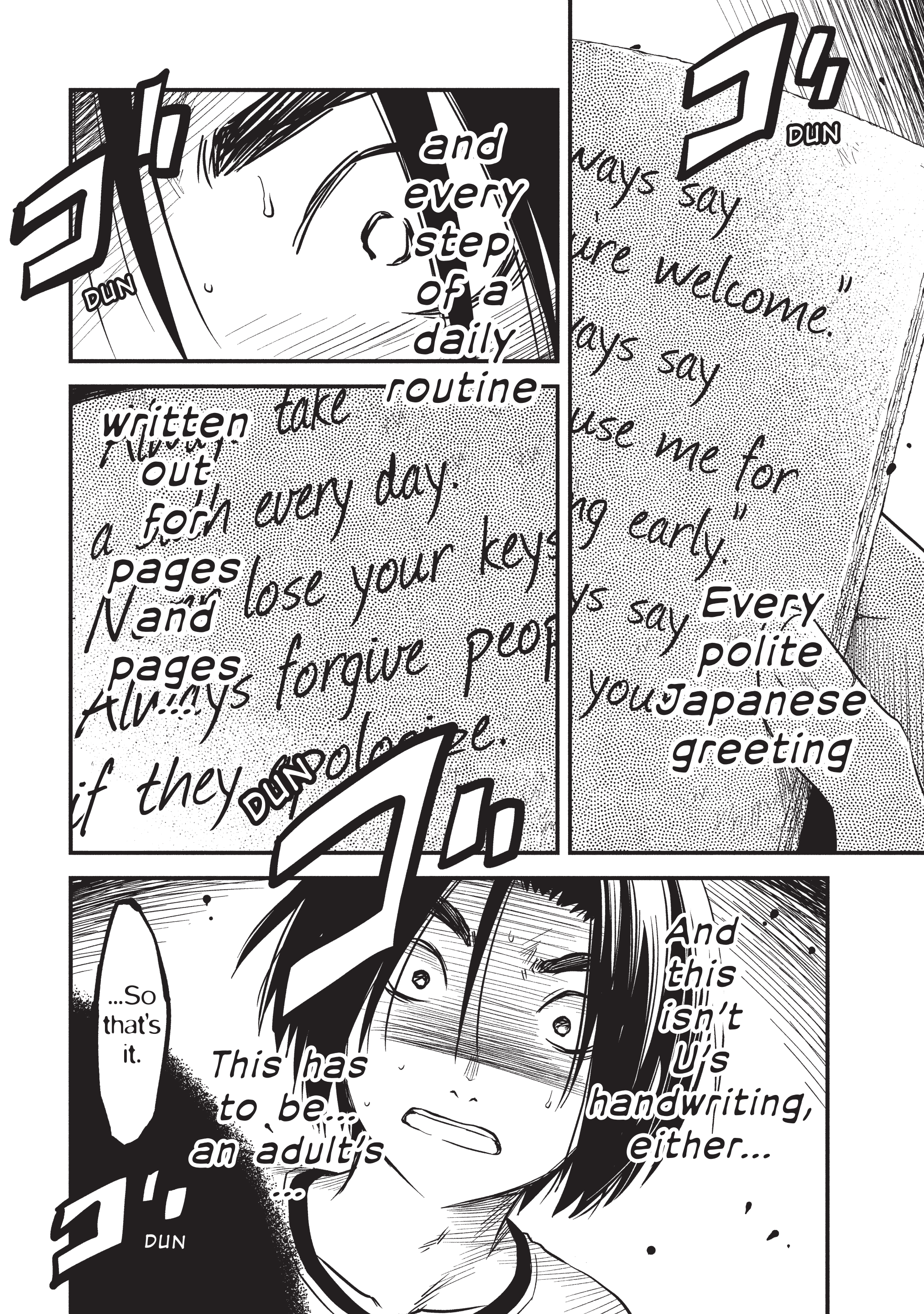

But why is this room so clean...
compared to the living room...?
Does U not use this room very much...?
!
NOTEBOOK

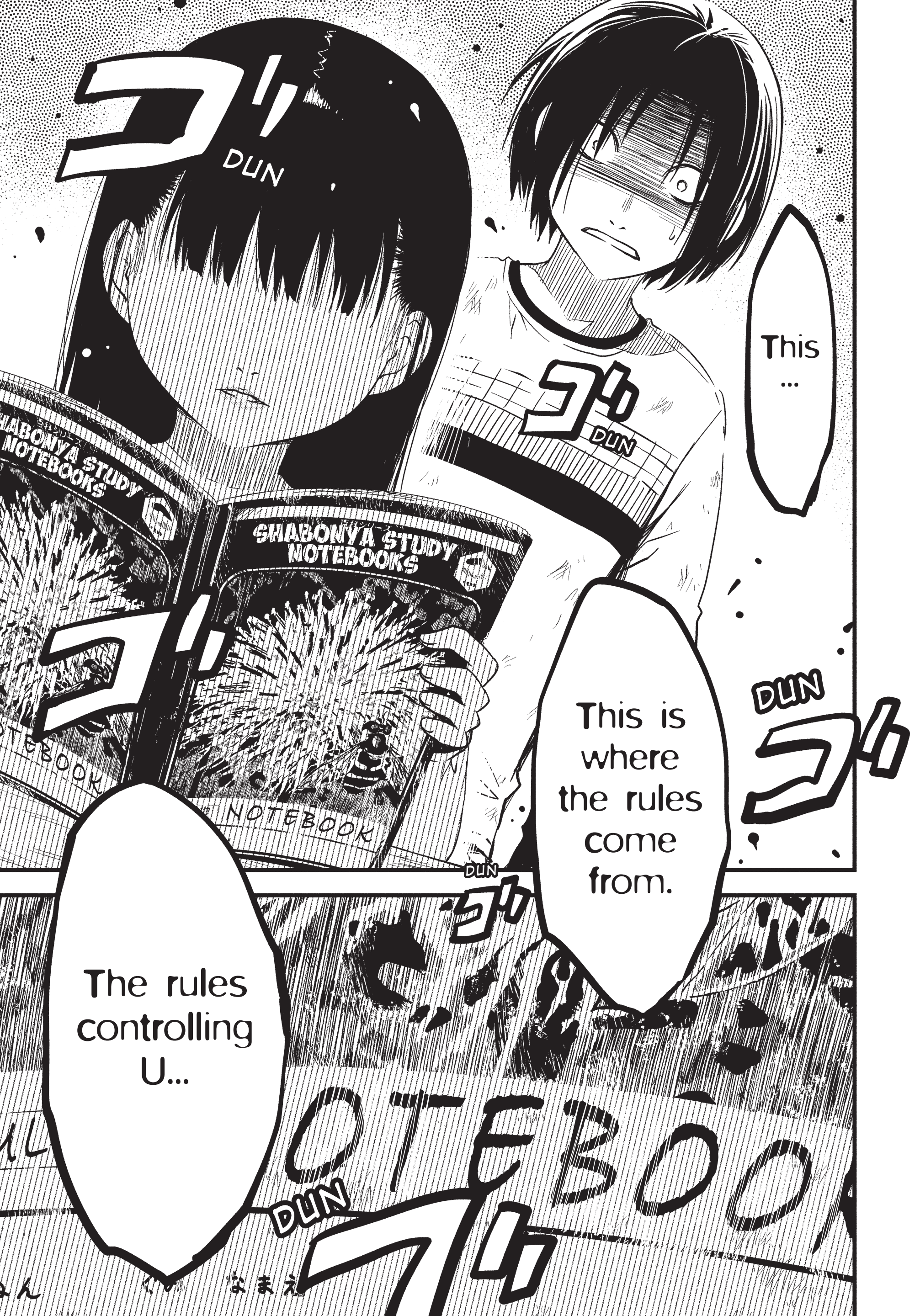

SHABONYA STUDY NOTEBOOKS
NOTEBOOK
Unruled
Year 1 Class 2
...
This must be her diary from years ago...
Oh. Maybe I can figure something out about her parents if I look through...
ペラ
FLIP

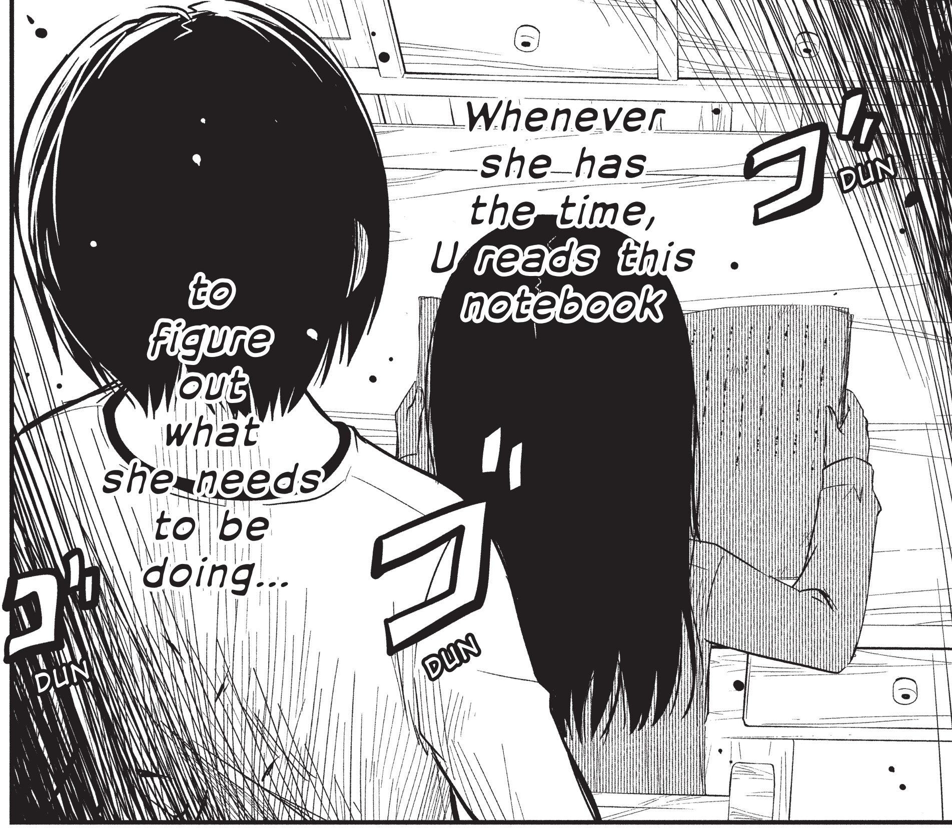

s say good morning.
s say "Thank you for
ゴ DUN
ゴ DUN

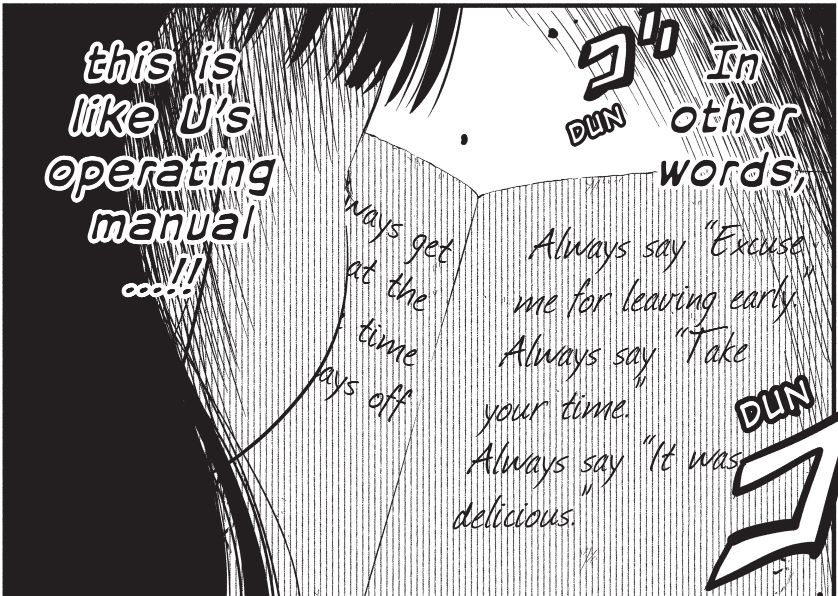

ゴ
DUN
NO ...!!
ゴ
DUN
y "Good morning."
"Thank you for this meal."
"Thank you for the food.",
ll be going now."
e a nice day."
ome home."
meet you."
ou."
e."

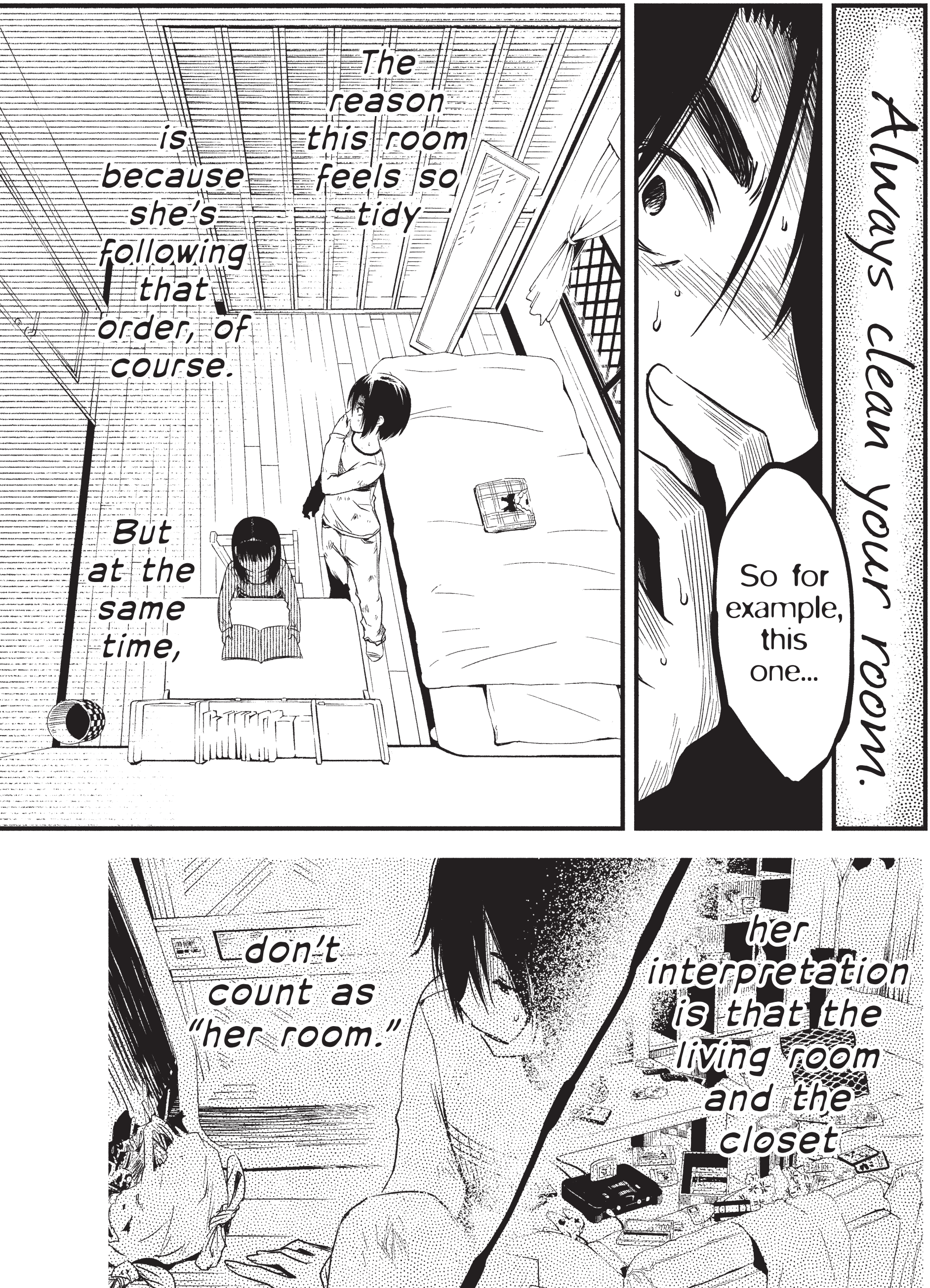

Always say
Always say
Always say "T
Always say "I'll
Always say "Have
Always say "Welcom
Always say "Nice to
Always say "Thank you
Always say "E use me.
Always say "He "
Always s G dbye."
DUN
DUN
This isn't ...
any sort of diary at all...!!
SHABONYA STUDY NOTEBOOKS

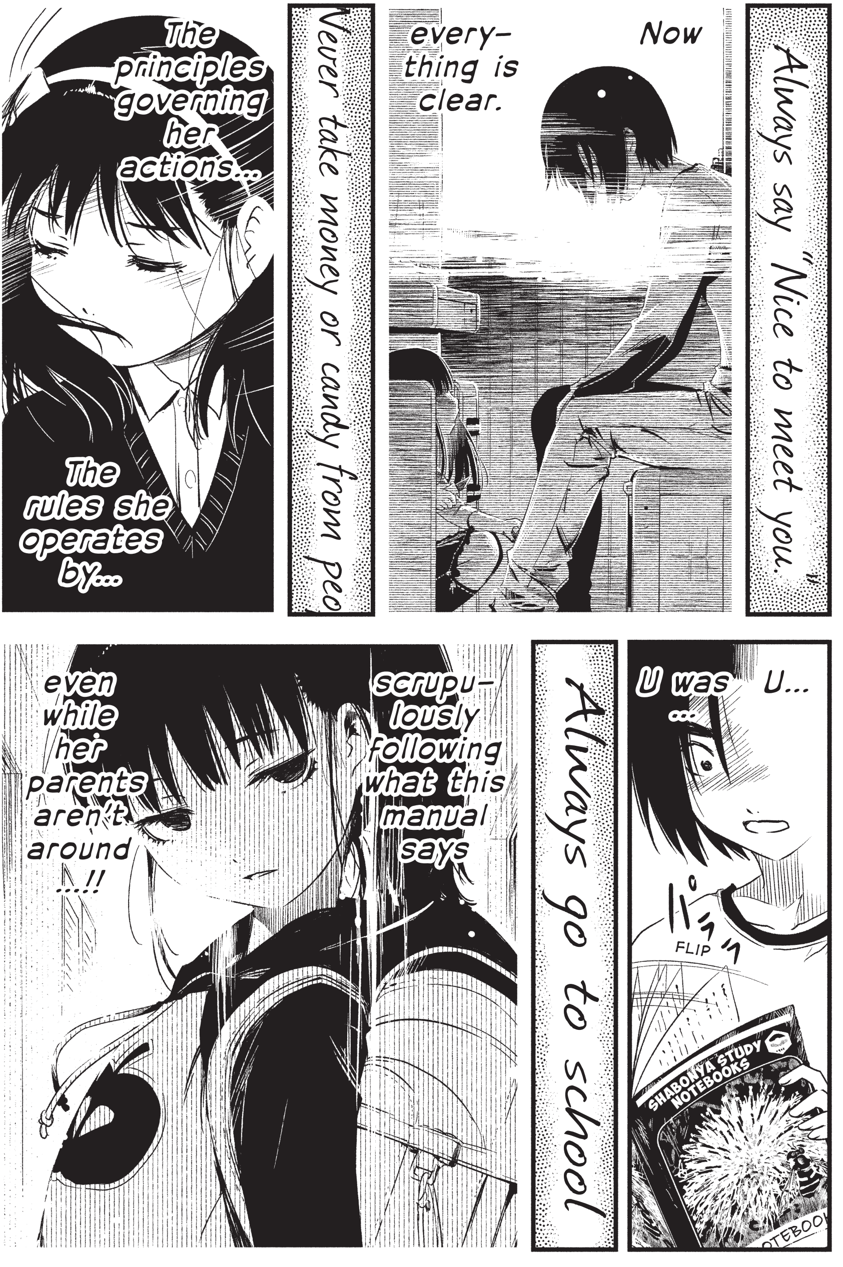

DUN
ways say
ure welcome."
ays say
use me for
g early."
ys say
you.
Every polite Japanese greeting
DUN
and every step of a daily routine
written out for pages and pages
take
th every day.
lose your keys.
Always forgive peop
if they apologize.
DUN
And this isn't U's handwriting, either...
This has to be... an adult's...
...So that's it.
DUN

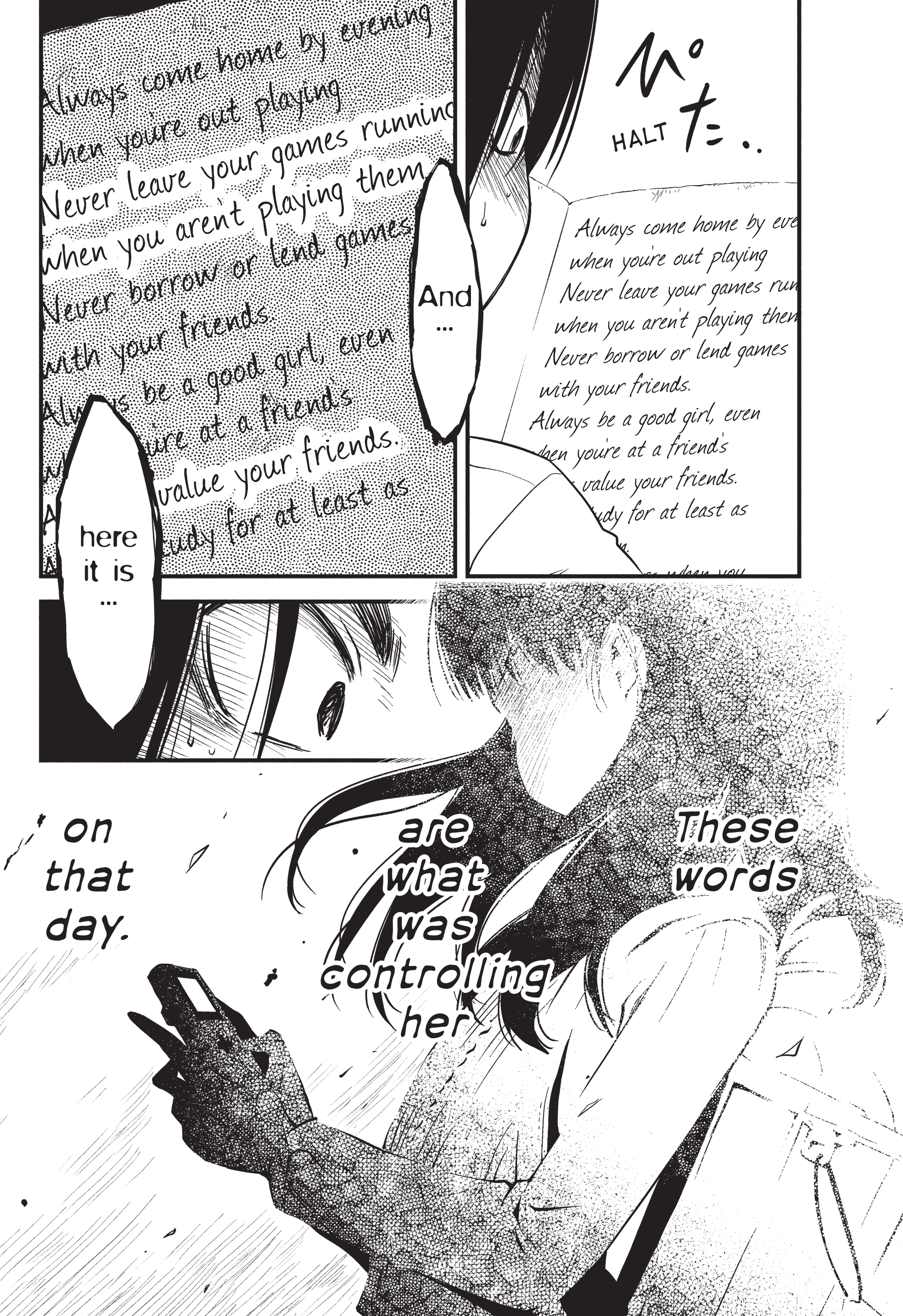

This …
DUN
ゴ
DUN
ゴ
ゴ
DUN
SHABONYA STUDY NOTEBOOKS
SHABONYA STUDY NOTEBOOKS
ゴ
NOTEBOOK
NOTEBOOK
This is where the rules come from.
DUN
ゴ
The rules controlling U…
OTEBOO
DUN
ゴ
なまえ
ん

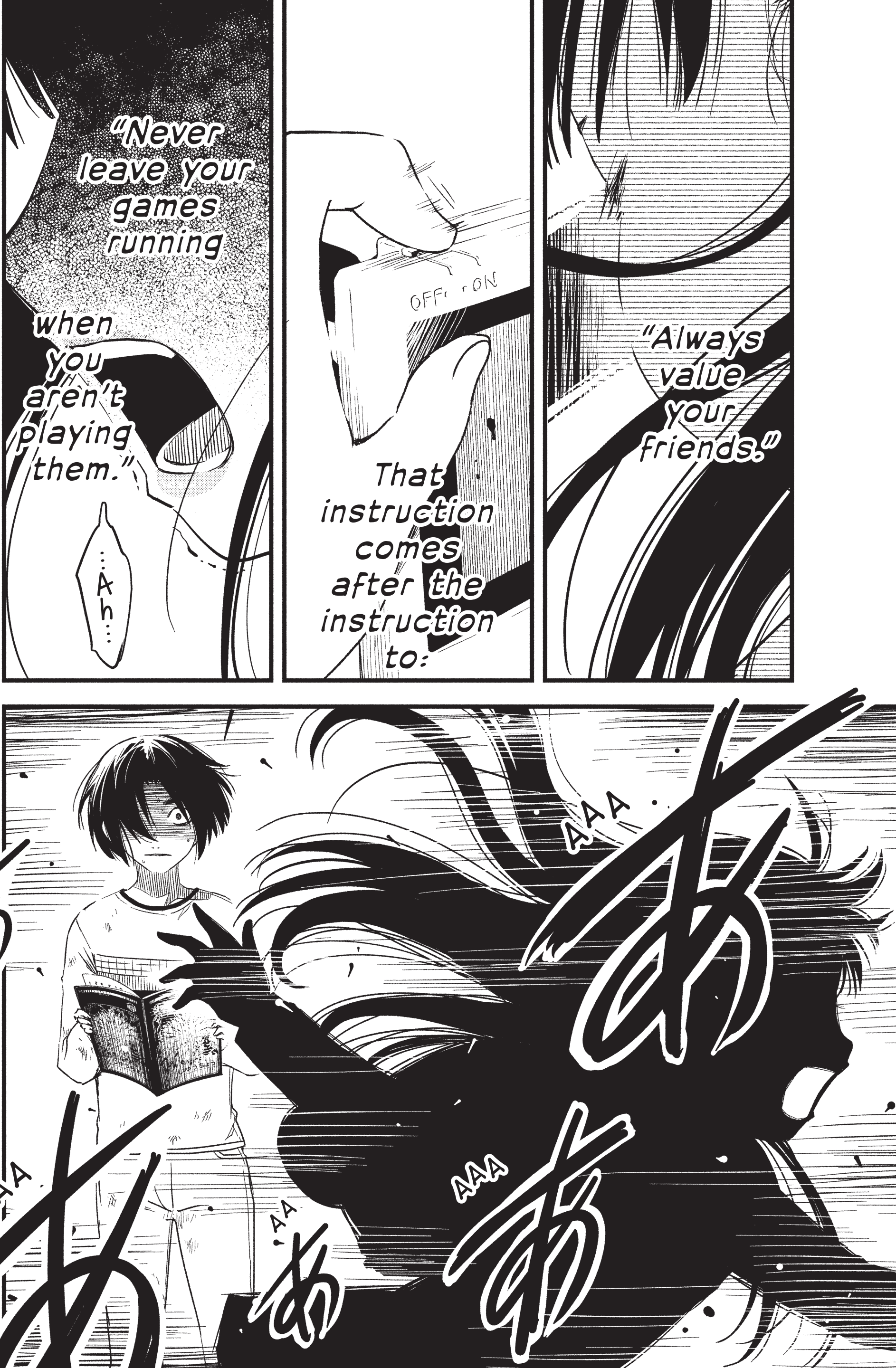

Whenever she has the time, U reads this notebook
ゴ DUN
to figure out what she needs to be doing...
ゴ DUN
ゴ DUN

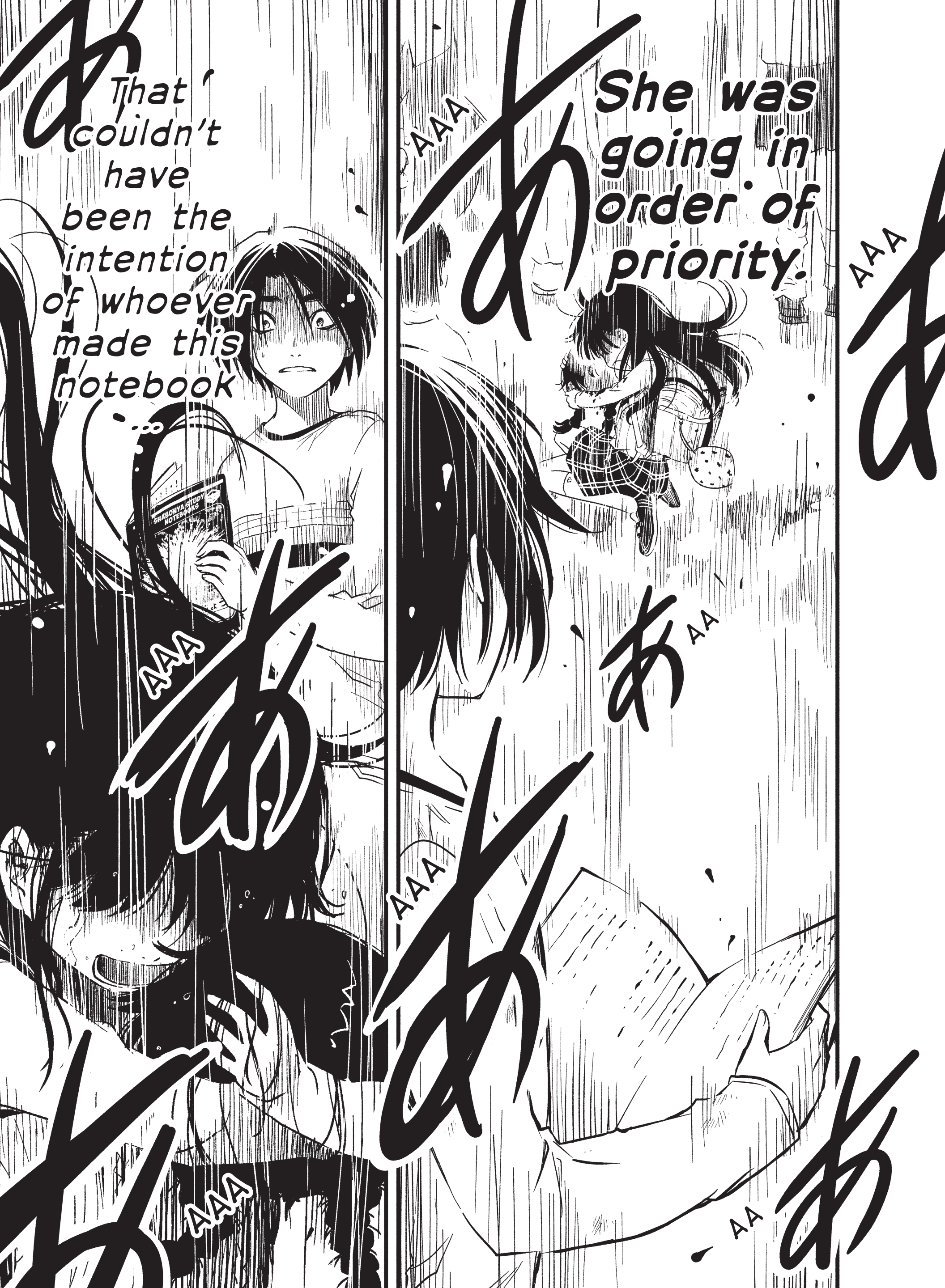

In other words,
ゴ DUN
this is like U's operating manual ...!!
Always say "Excuse me for leaving early."
Always say "Take your time."
Always say "It was delicious."
ways get
at the
time
ays off
DUN ゴ


Always clean your room.
So for example, this one...
The reason this room feels so tidy
is because she's following that order, of course.
But at the same time,
her interpretation is that the living room and the closet
don't count as "her room."

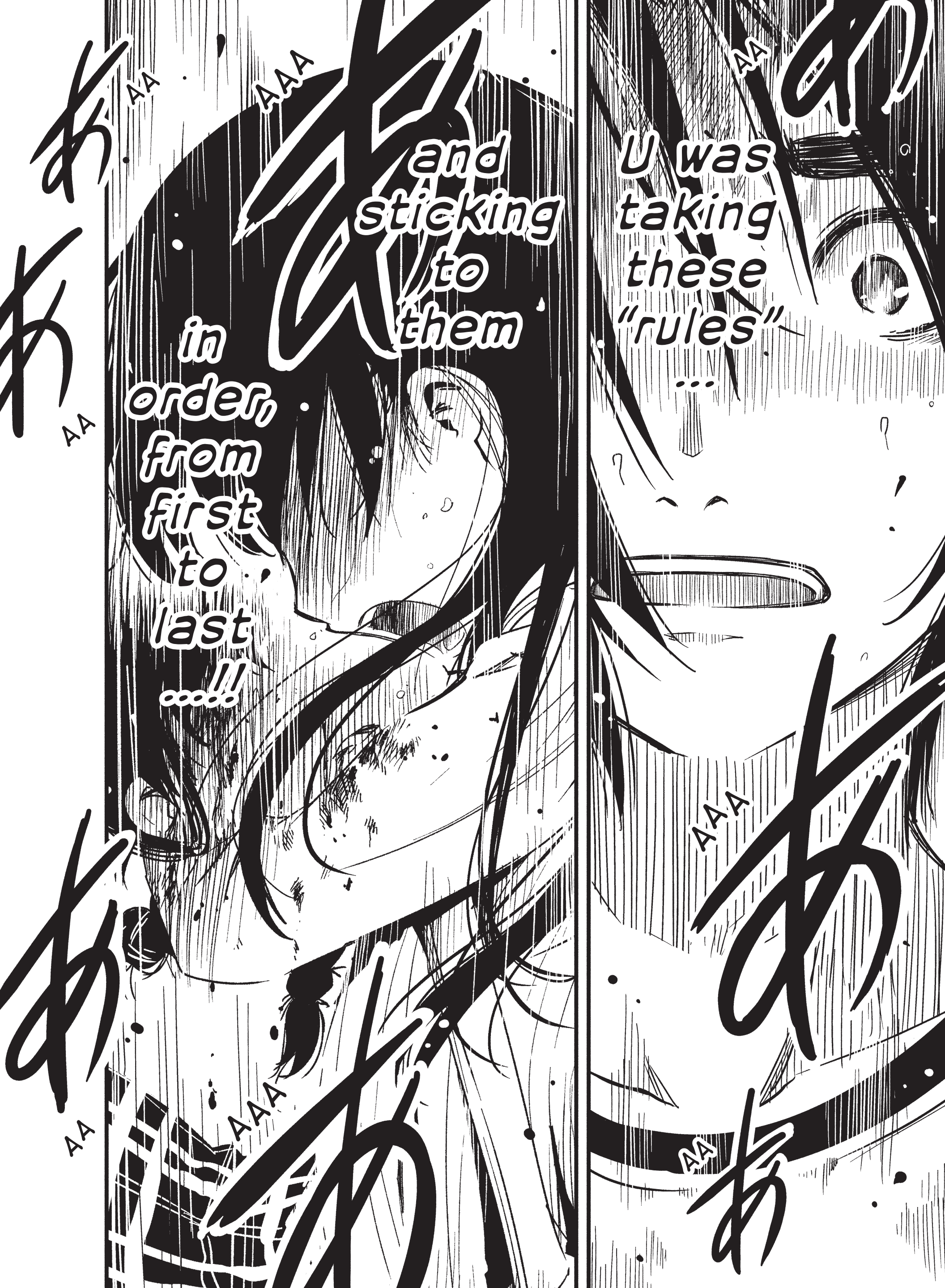

Always say "Nice to meet you."
Now
everything is clear.
Never take money or candy from peo
The principles governing her actions...
The rules she operates by...
U...
U was ...
FLIP
SHABONYA STUDY NOTEBOOKS
OTEBOO
Always go to school
scrupulously following what this manual says
even while her parents aren't around ...!!

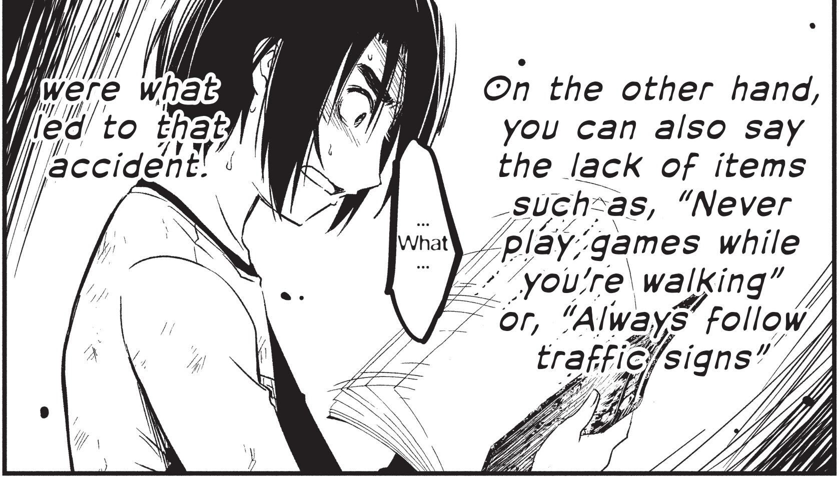

ぱた..
HALT
Always come home by eve
when you're out playing
Never leave your games run
when you aren't playing them
Never borrow or lend games
with your friends.
Always be a good girl, even
when you're at a friend's
value your friends.
udy for at least as
And ...
Always come home by evening
when you're out playing
Never leave your games running
when you aren't playing them
Never borrow or lend games
with your friends.
Always be a good girl, even
when you're at a friend's
value your friends.
udy for at least as
here it is ...
These words
are what was controlling her
on that day.

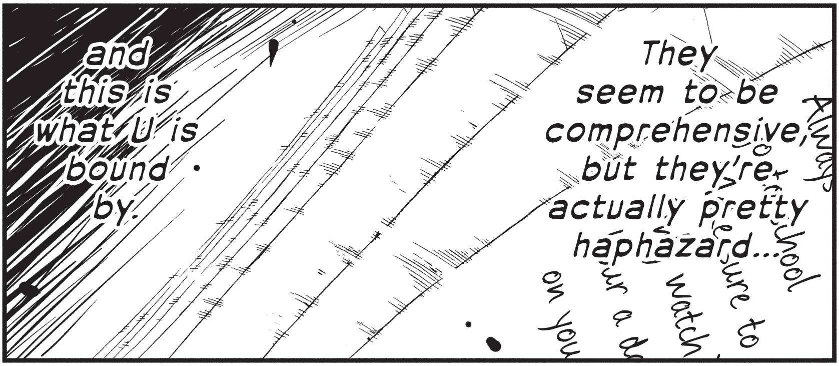

"Always value your friends."
That instruction comes after the instruction to:
OFF ON
"Never leave your games running when you aren't playing them."
...Ah...
AAA あ
AAA あ
AAA あ
AAA あ
AA あ

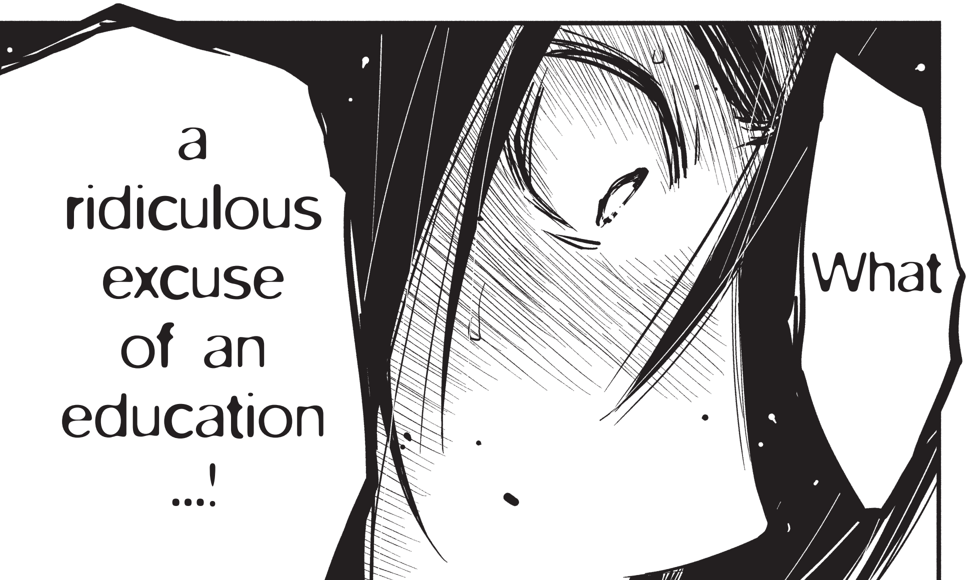


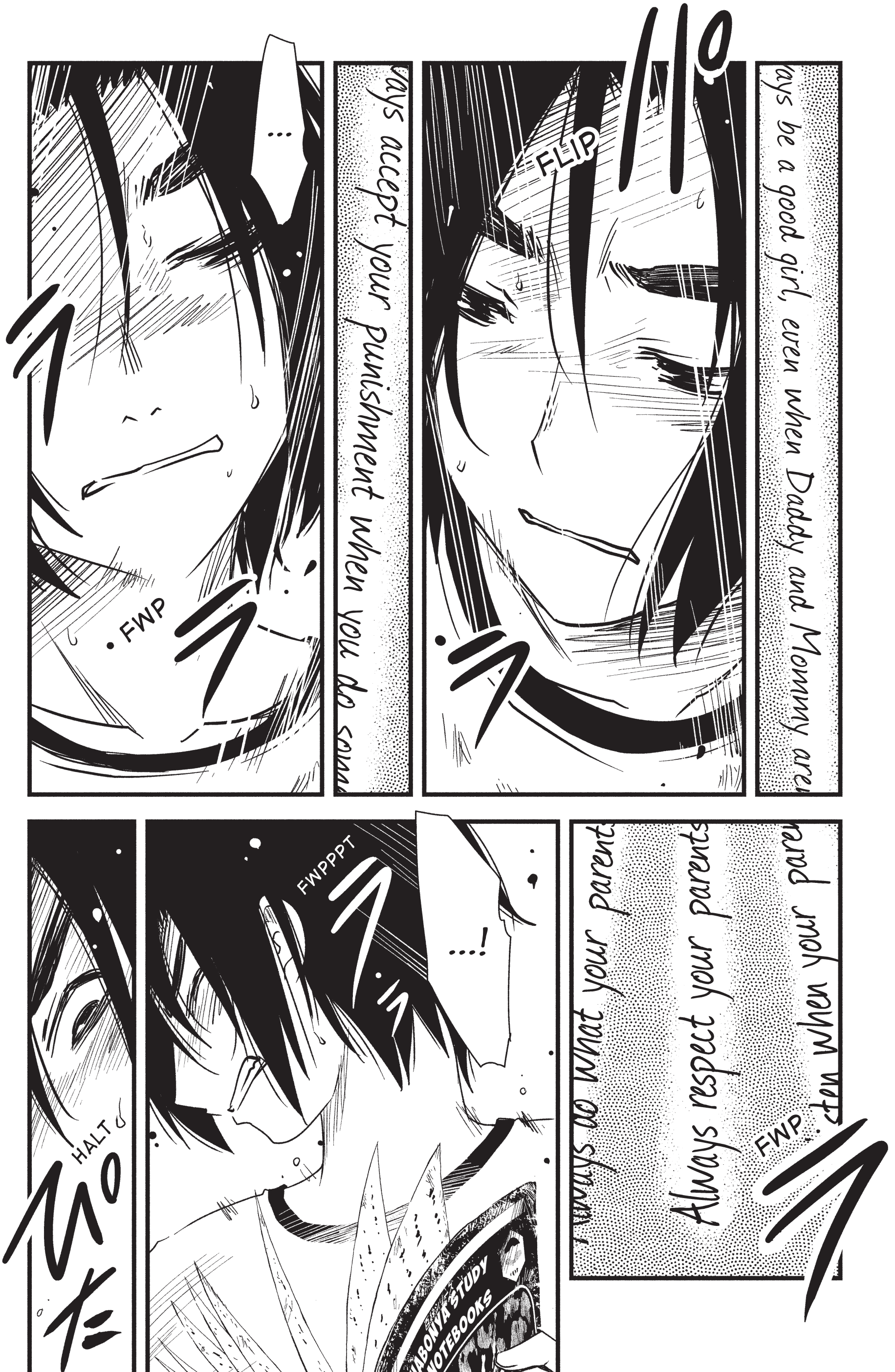
あ AAA
She was going in order of priority.
あ AAA
あ AA
あ AAA
あ AA
That couldn't have been the intention of whoever made this notebook...
SHABONYA STUDY NOTEBOOKS
あ AAA
あ AAA

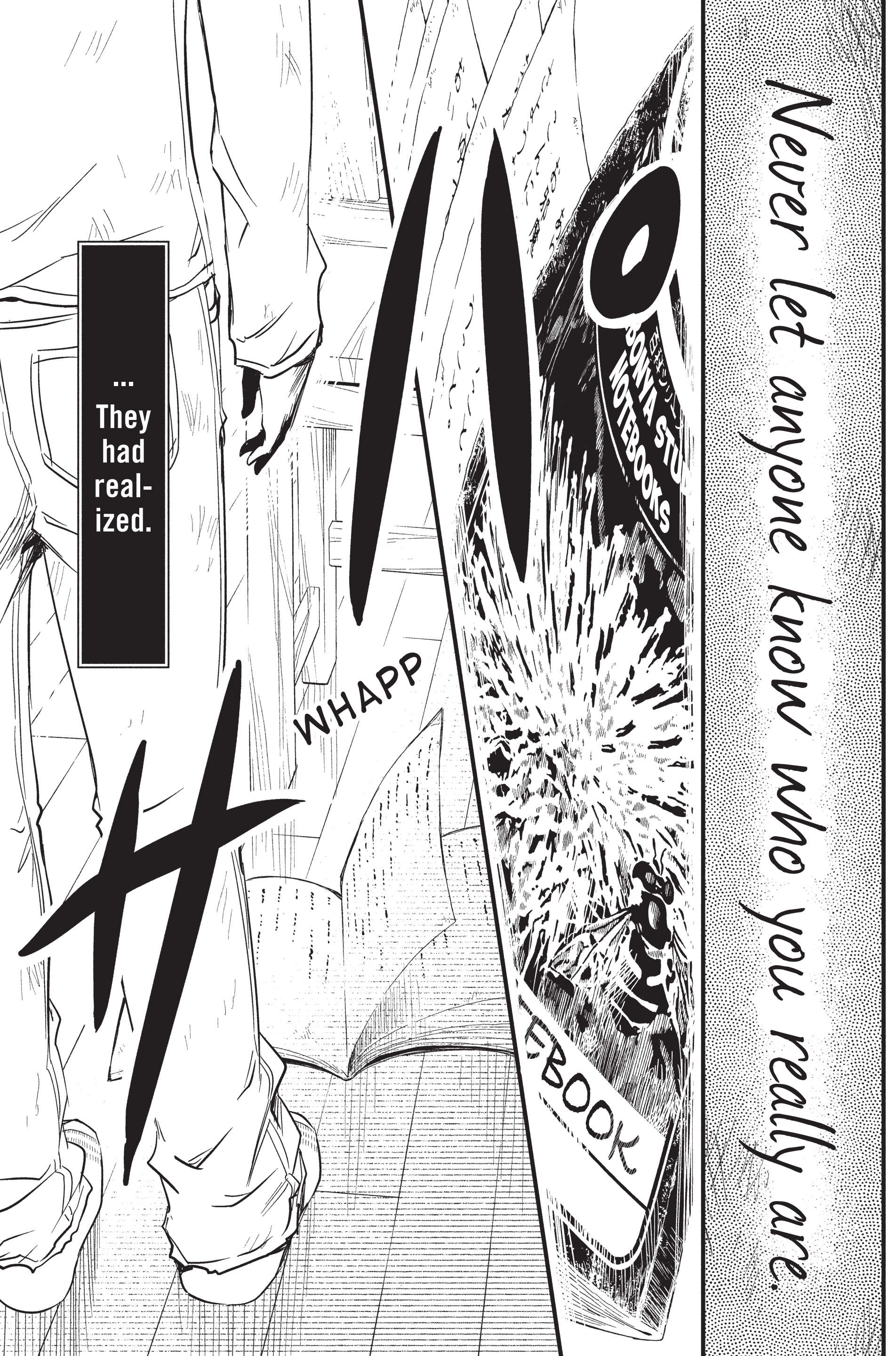

あ
AA
U was taking these "rules" …
あ
AAA
あ
AA
あ
AAA
and sticking to them
in order, from first to last …!!
あ
AA
あ
AA
あ
AAA
あ
AA

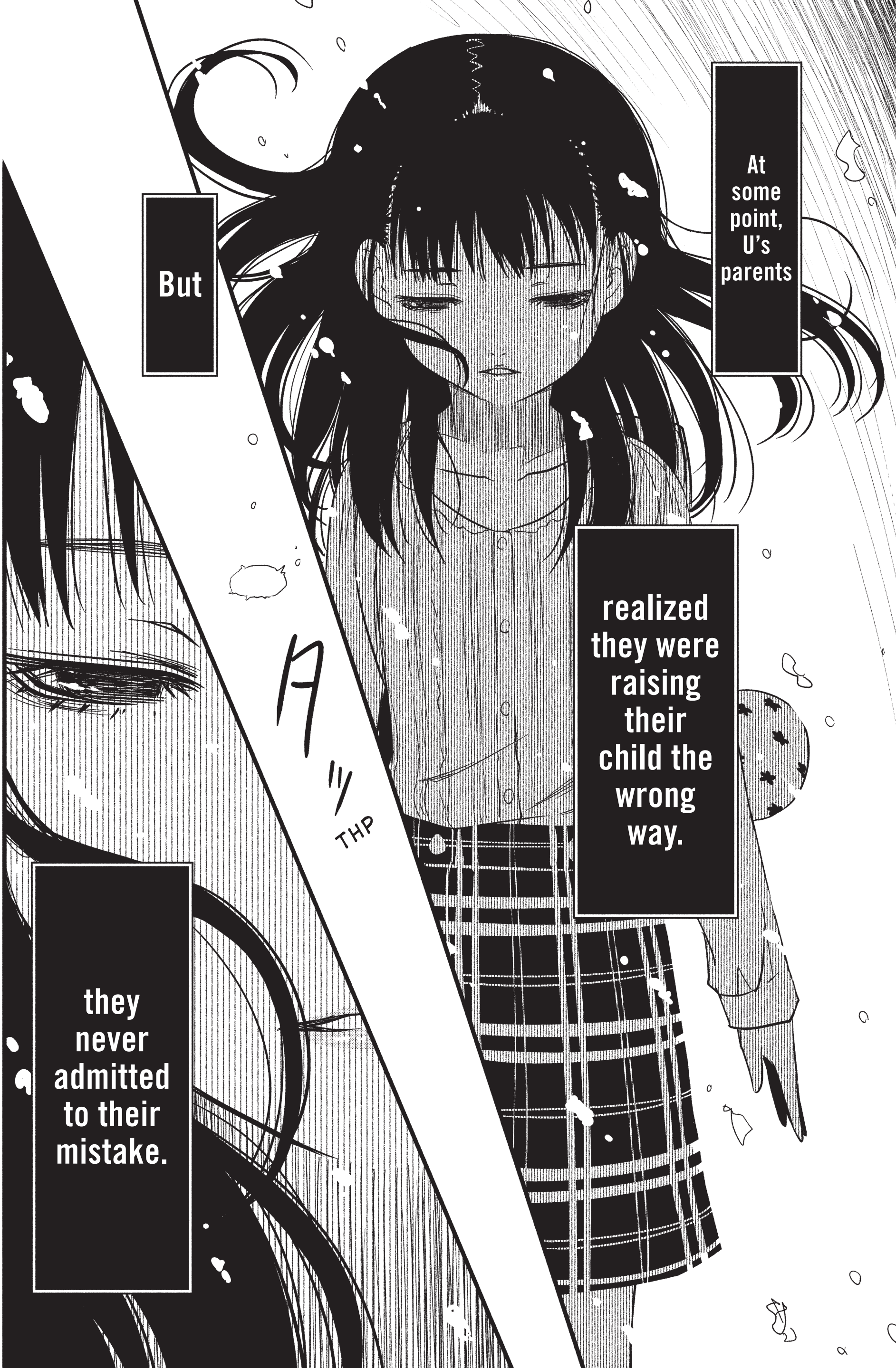

On the other hand, you can also say the lack of items such as, "Never play games while you're walking" or, "Always follow traffic signs"
…What…
were what led to that accident.

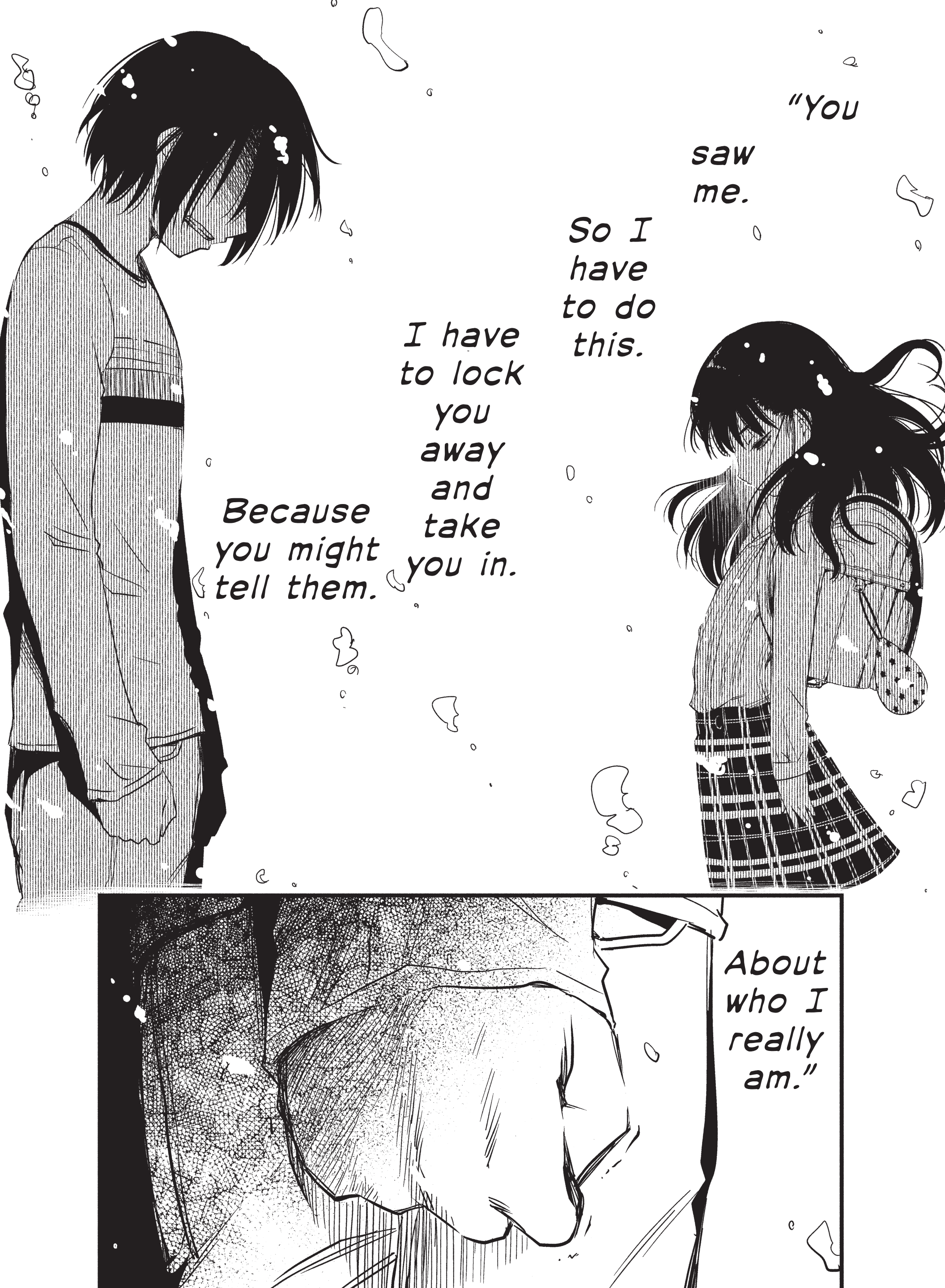

They seem to be comprehensive, but they're actually pretty haphazard…
and this is what U is bound by.

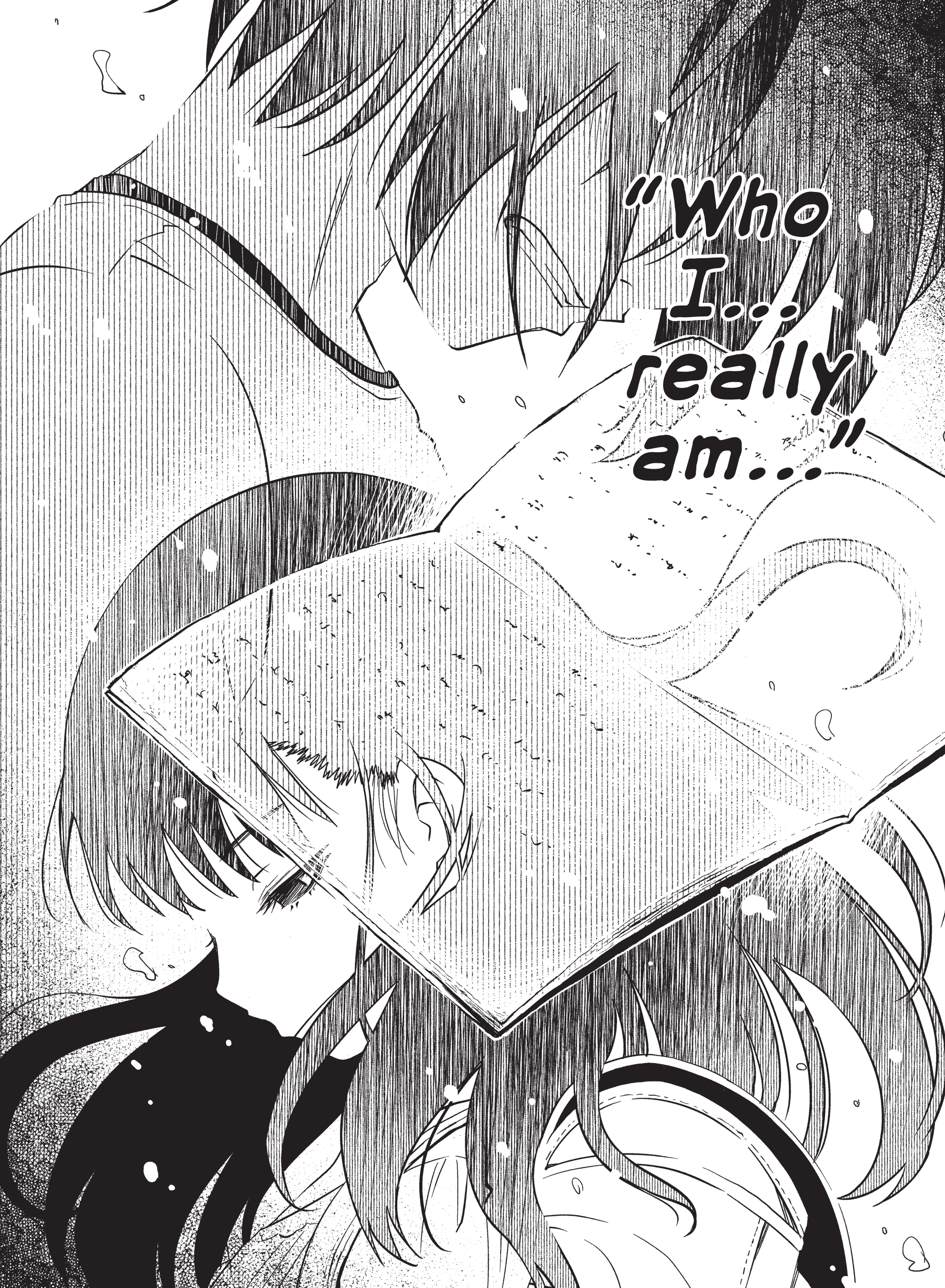

What
a ridiculous excuse of an education …!

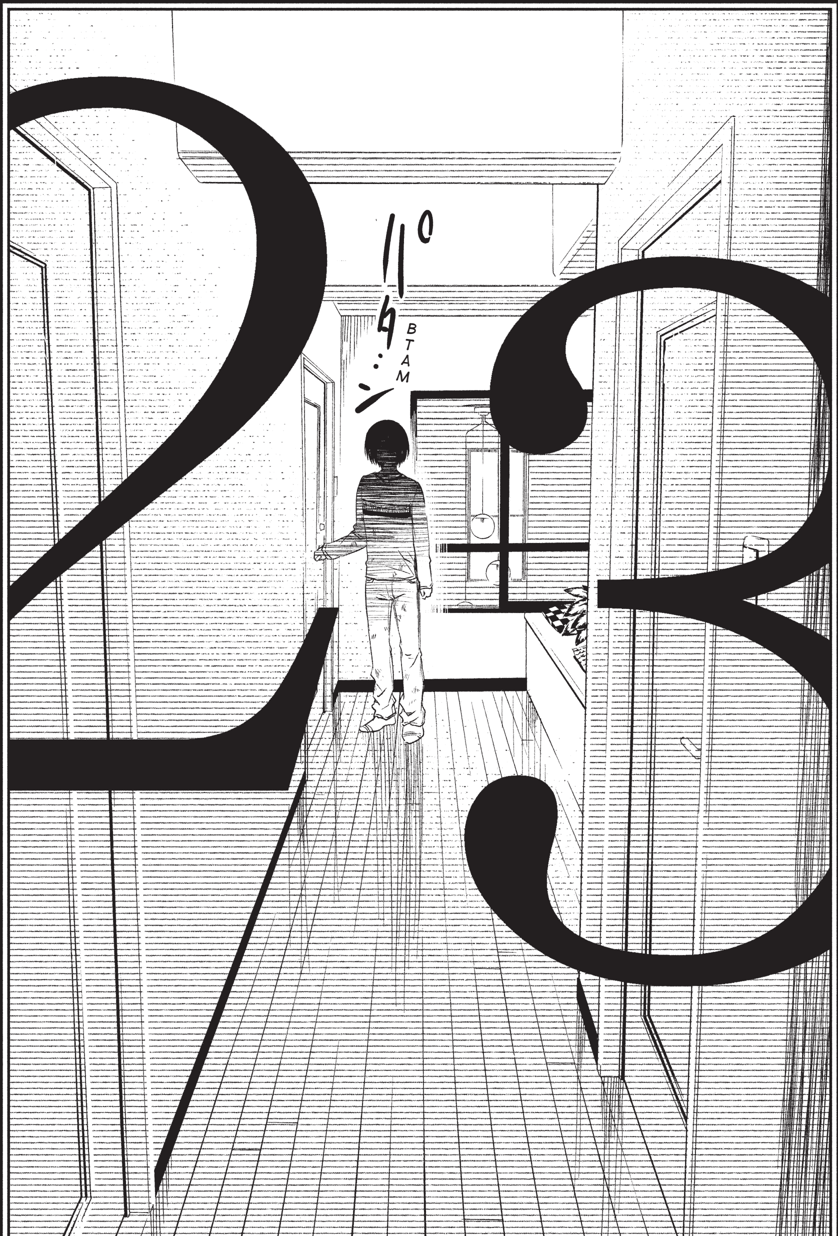

ways be a good girl, even when Daddy and Mommy are
FLIP
ways accept your punishment when you do som
...
FWP
ten when your paren
FWP
Always respect your parents
lways do What your parent
...!
FWPPPT
HALT
JABONYA STUDY NOTEBOOKS

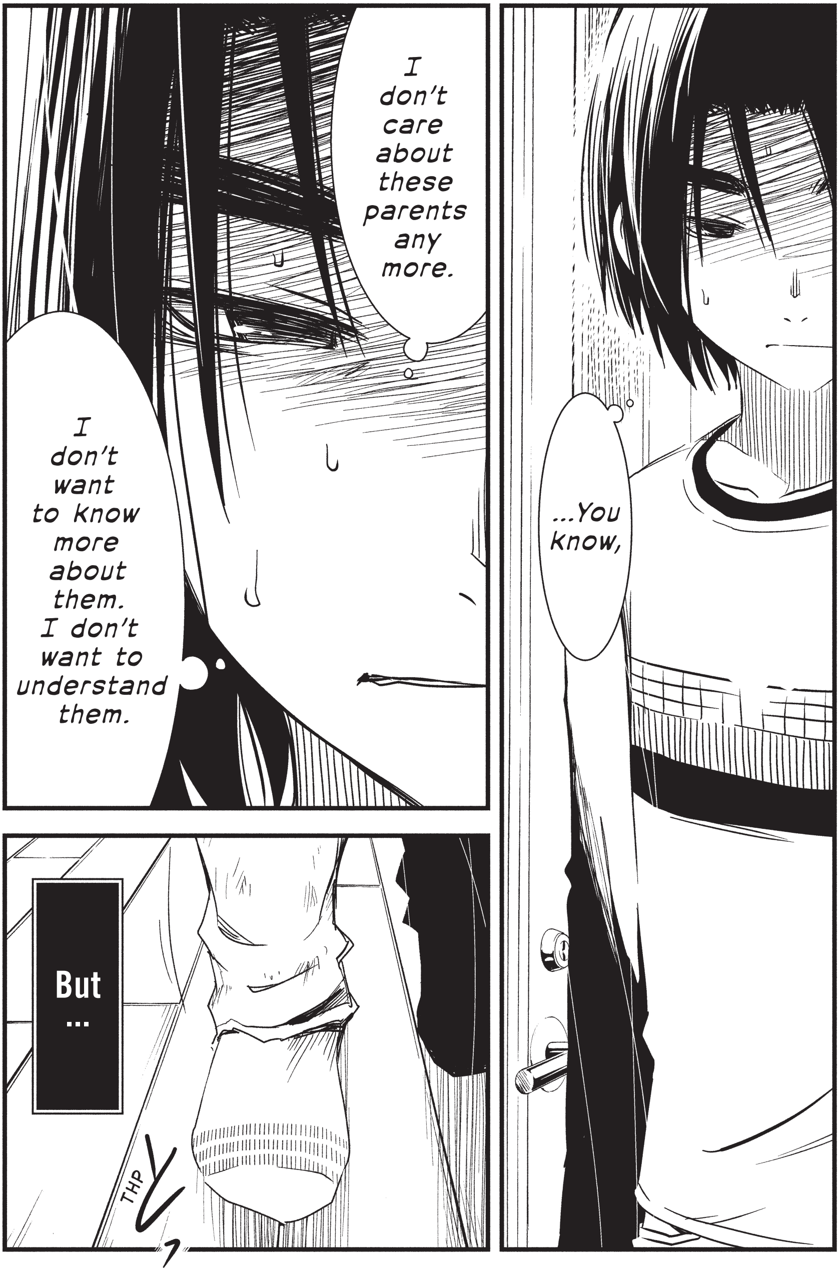

Never let anyone know who you really are.
SONYA STU
NOTEBOOKS
EBOOK
WHAPP
... They had realized.

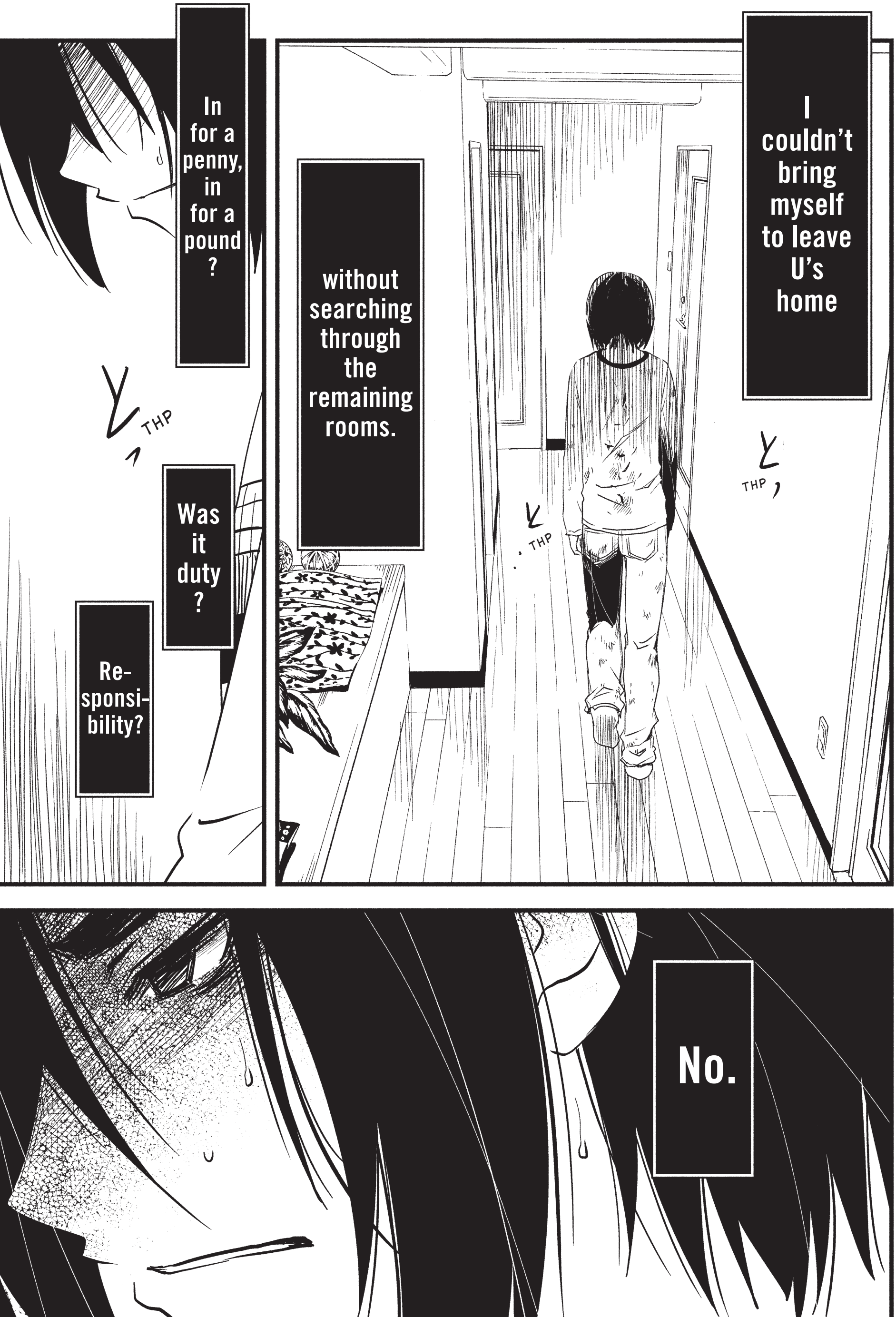

At some point, U's parents
realized they were raising their child the wrong way.
THP
But
they never admitted to their mistake.

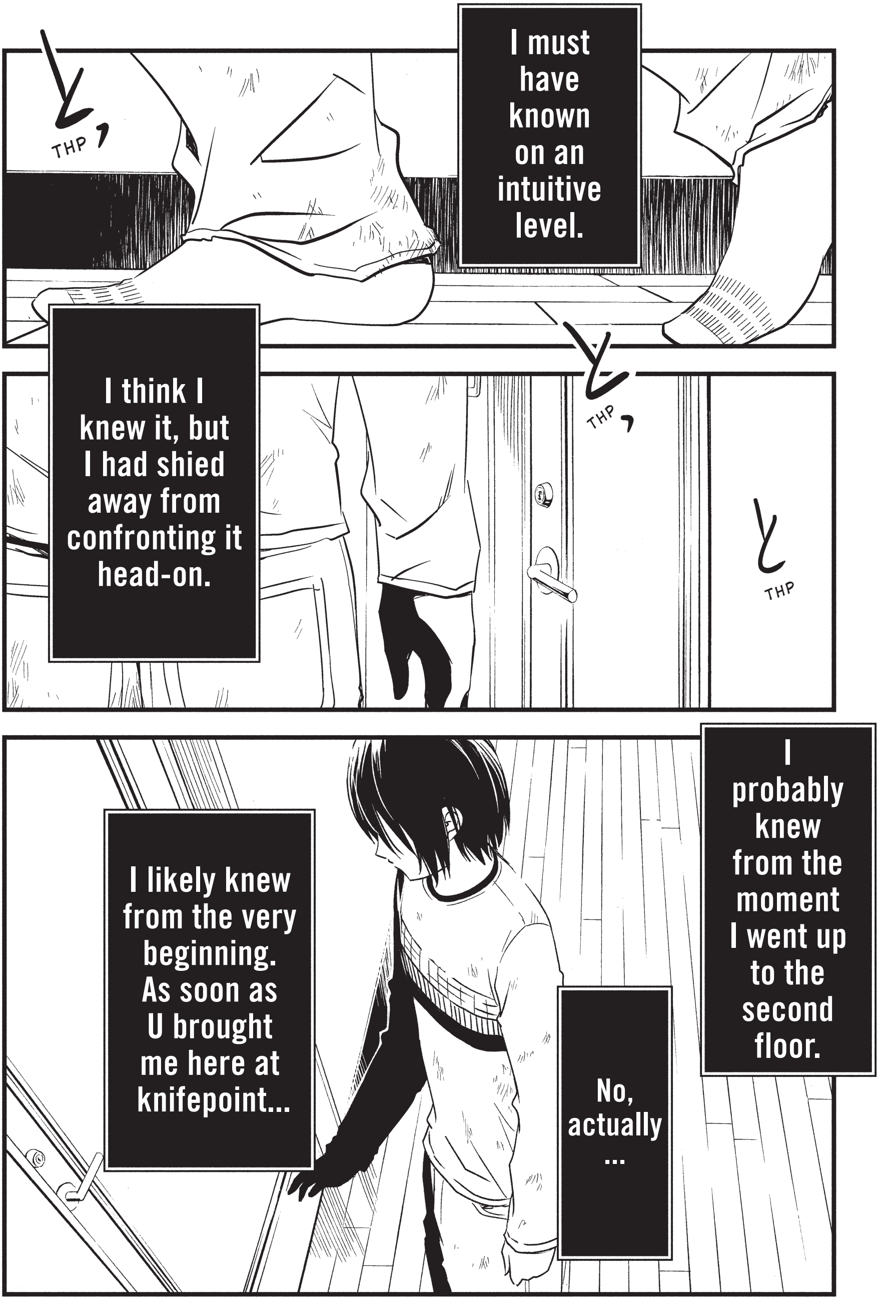

"You saw me.
So I have to do this.
I have to lock you away and take you in.
Because you might tell them.
About who I really am."

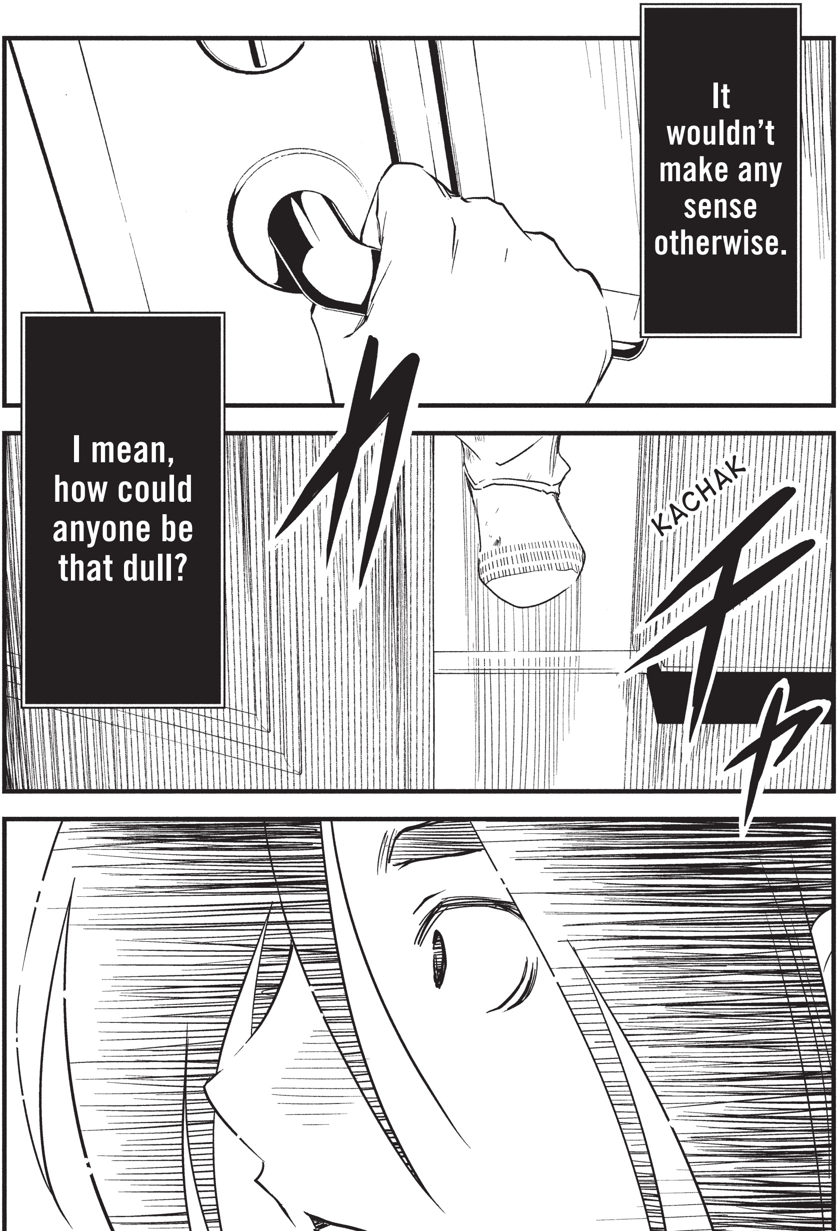

"Who I... really am..."

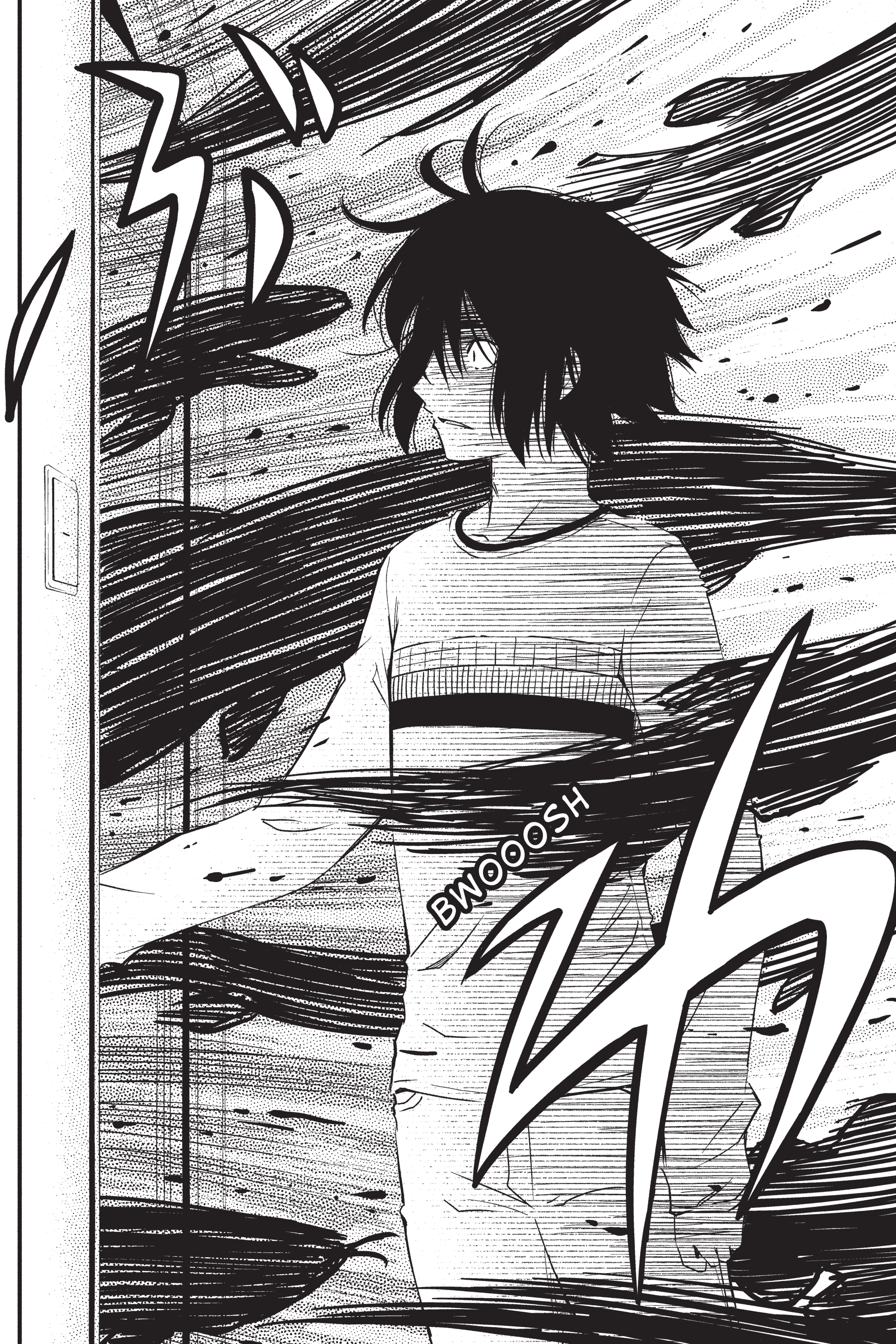

23
パタ…ン
BTAM

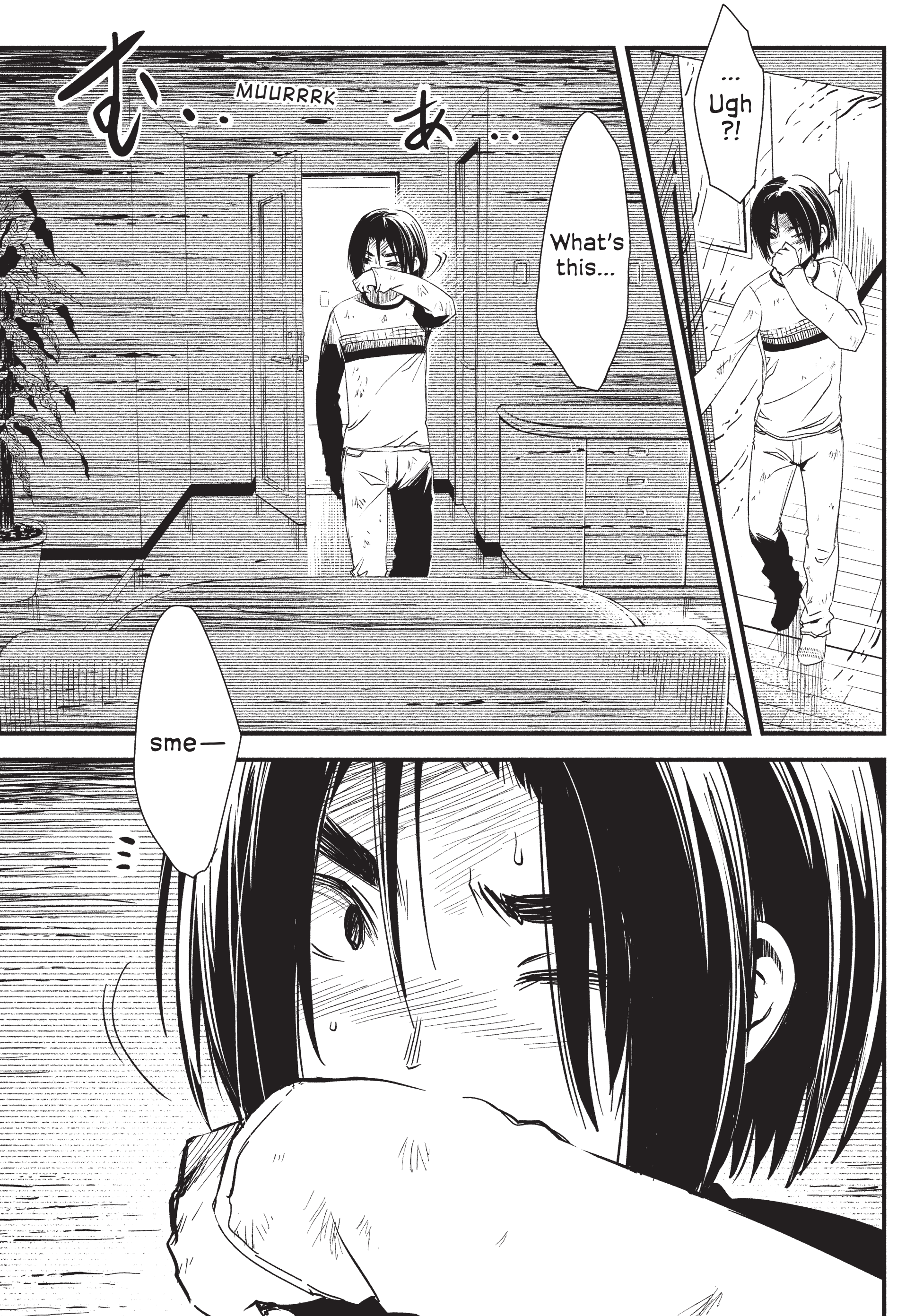

...You know,
I don't care about these parents any more.
I don't want to know more about them. I don't want to understand them.
But ...
THP

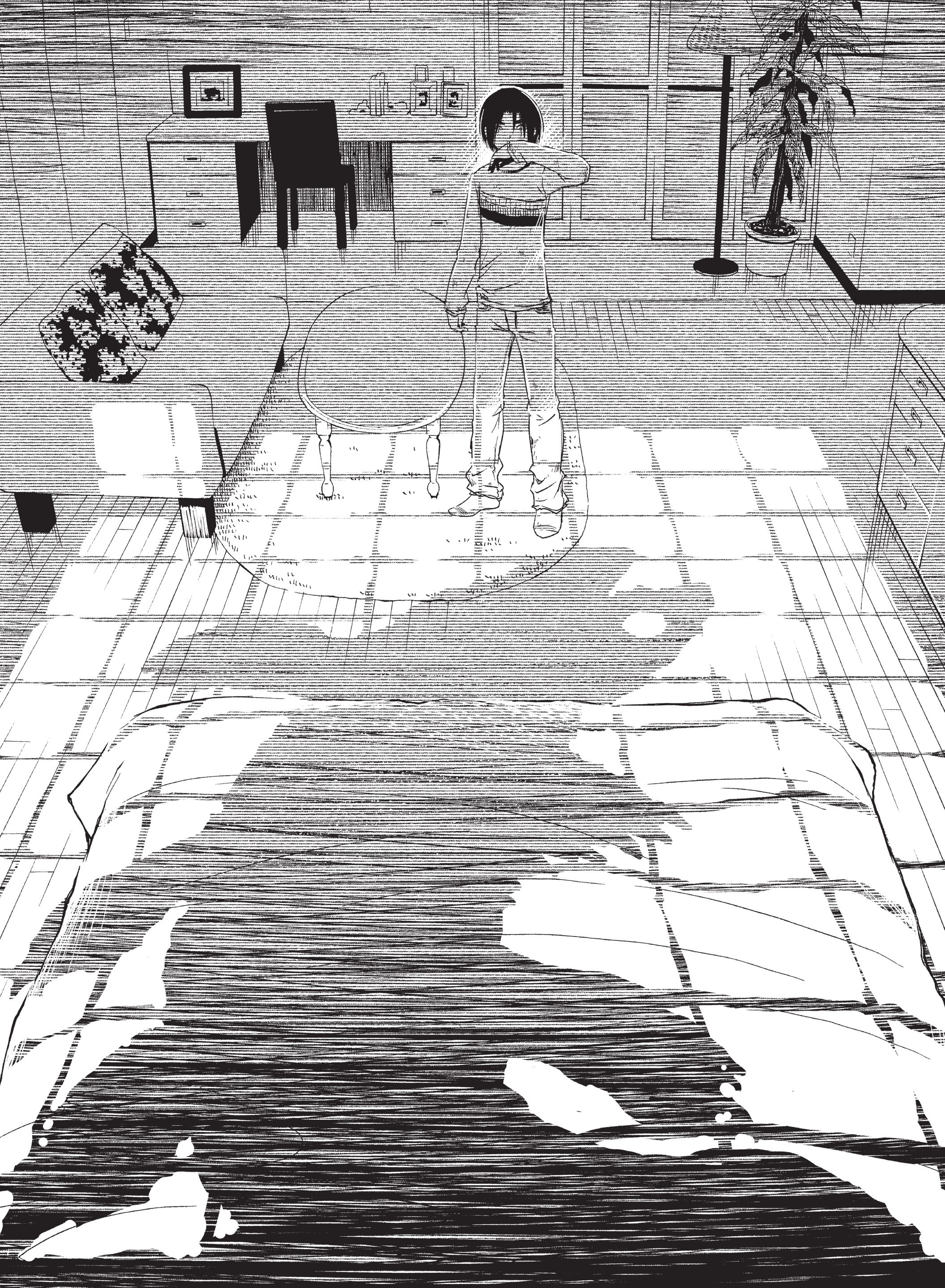

I couldn't bring myself to leave U's home
without searching through the remaining rooms.
THP
THP
In for a penny, in for a pound?
THP
Was it duty?
Responsibility?
No.

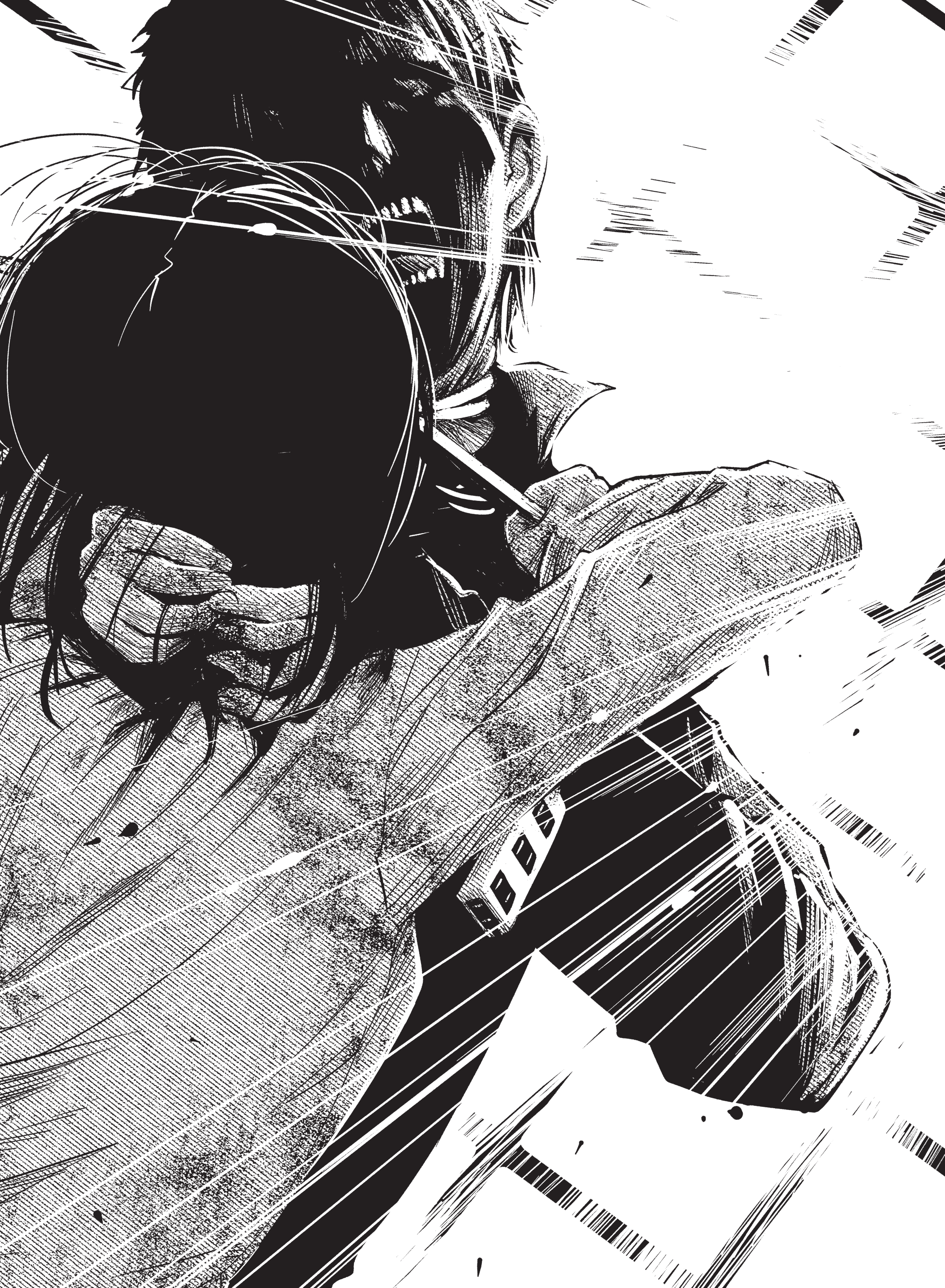

I must have known on an intuitive level.
と THP
と THP
と THP
I think I knew it, but I had shied away from confronting it head-on.
I probably knew from the moment I went up to the second floor.
No, actually...
I likely knew from the very beginning. As soon as U brought me here at knifepoint...

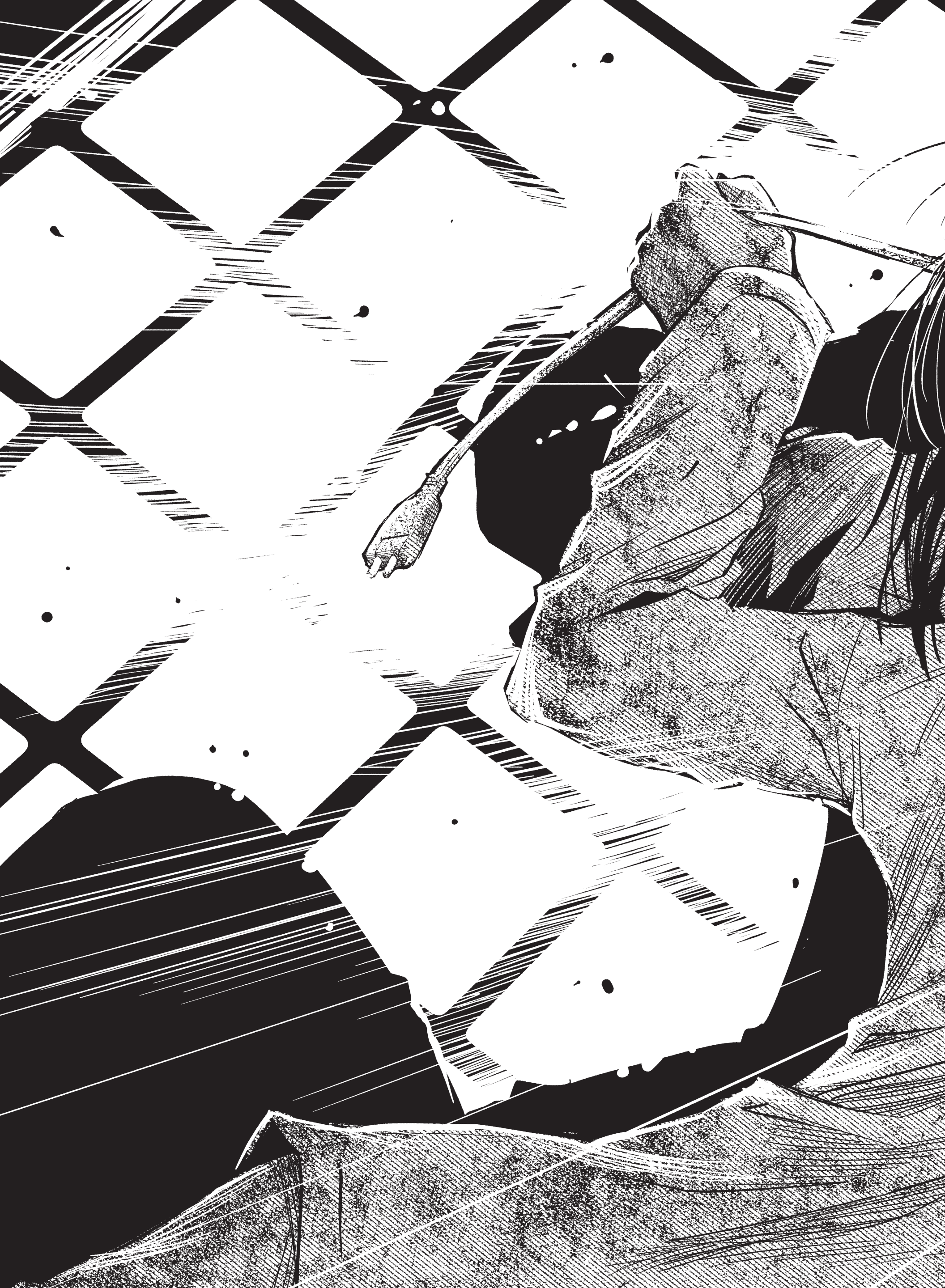

It wouldn't make any sense otherwise.
I mean, how could anyone be that dull?
KACHAK

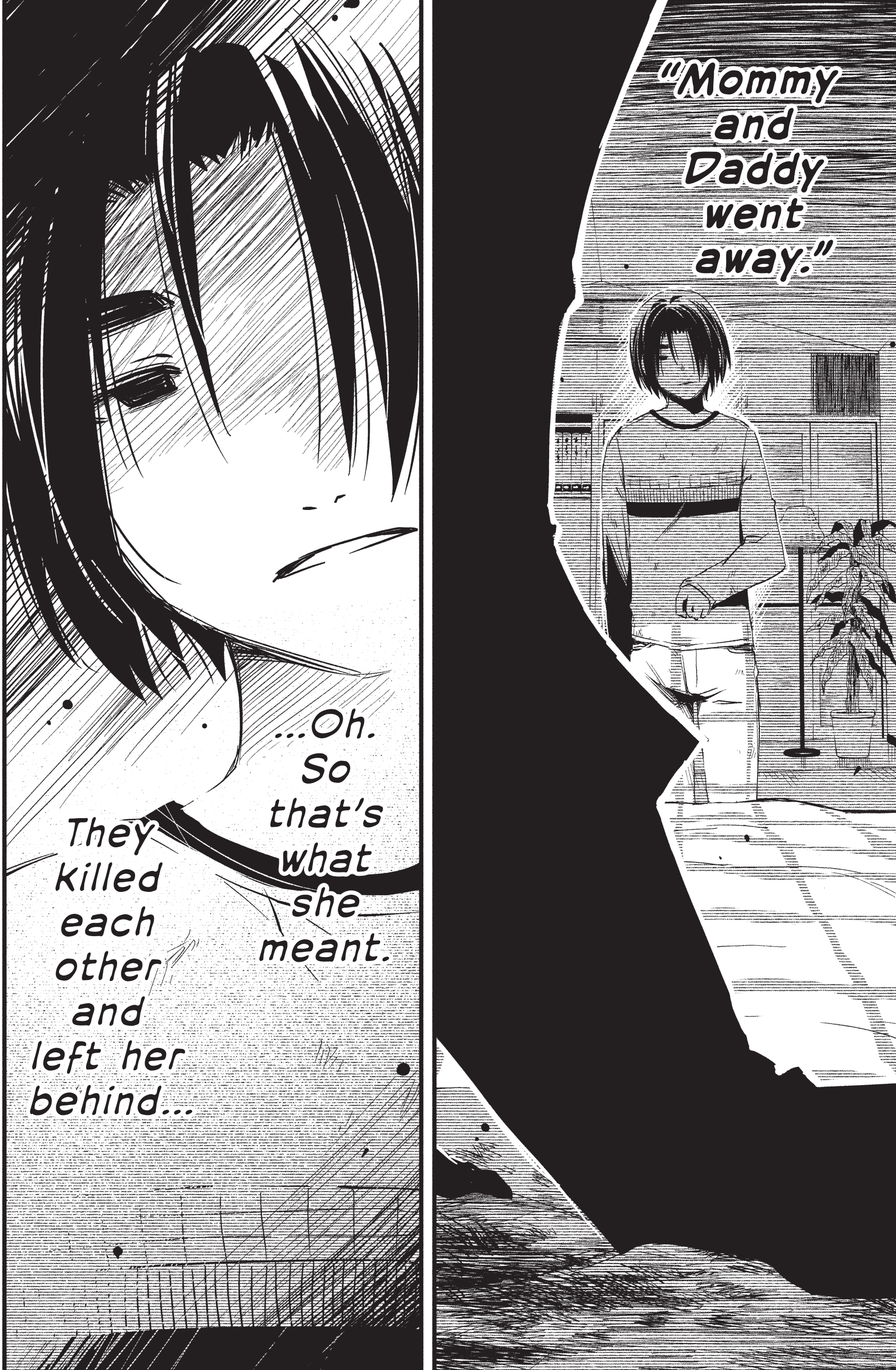

BWOOOSH

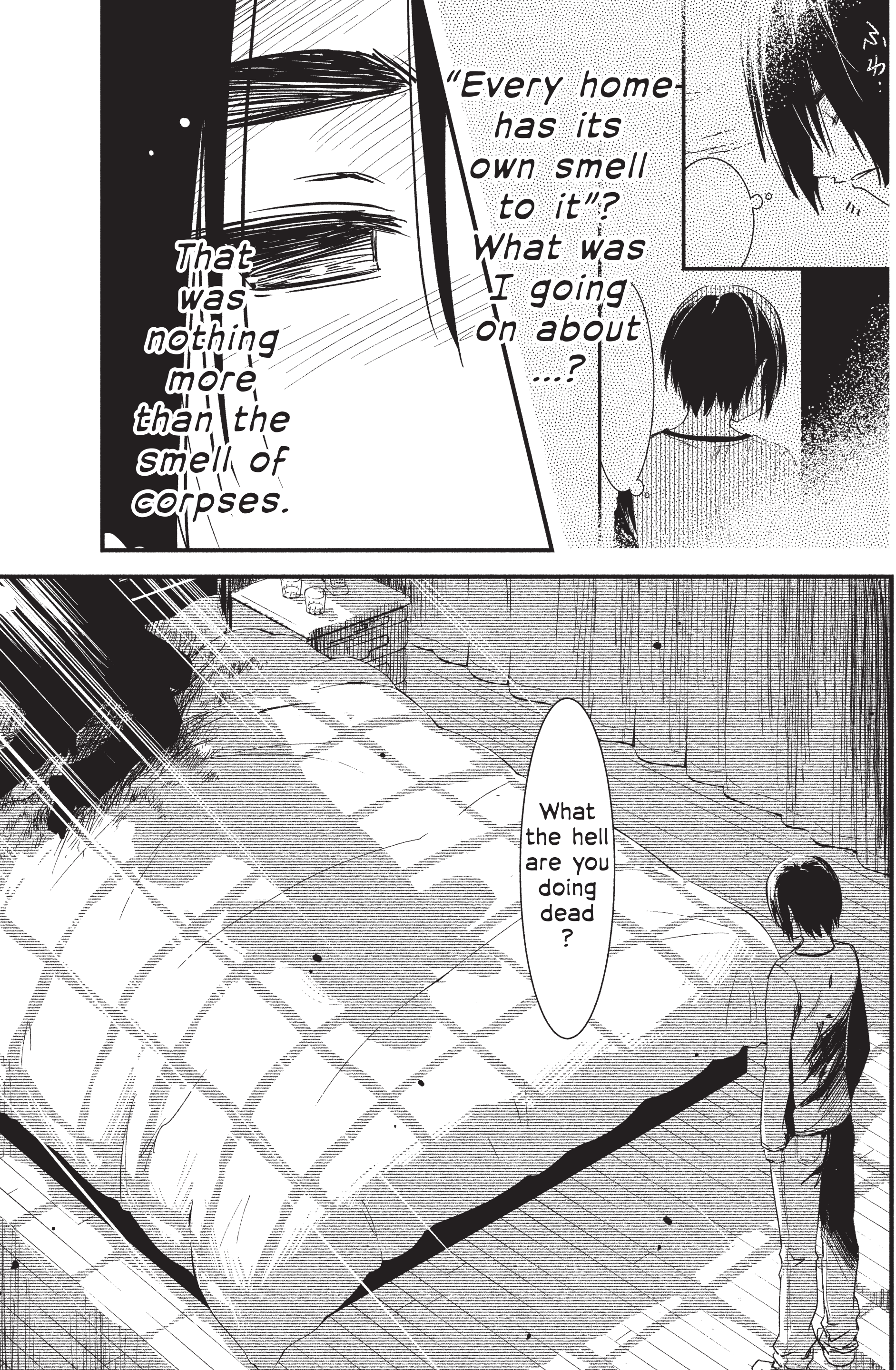

... Ugh ?!
む... ぁ...
MUURRRK
What's this...
sme—

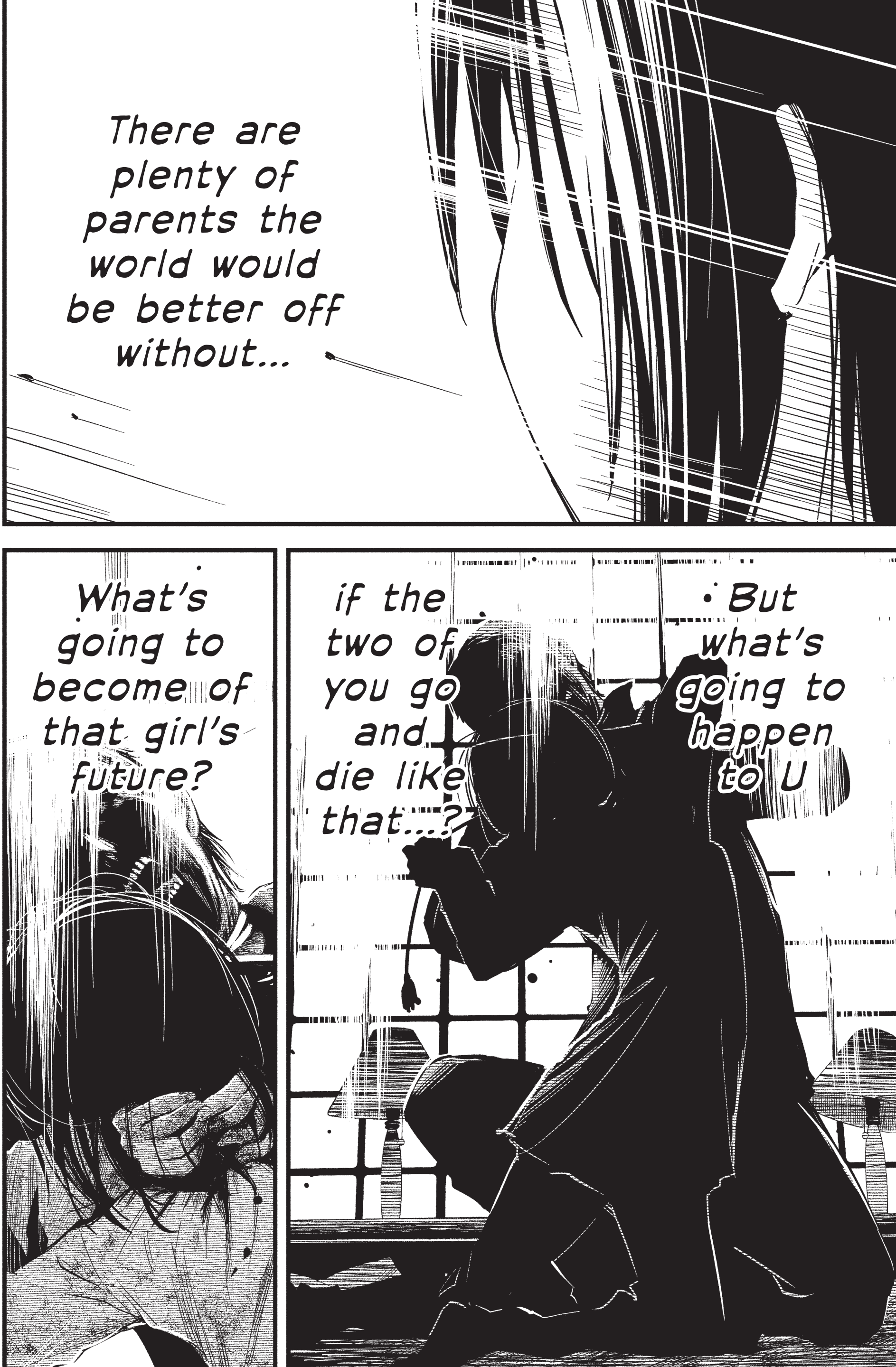


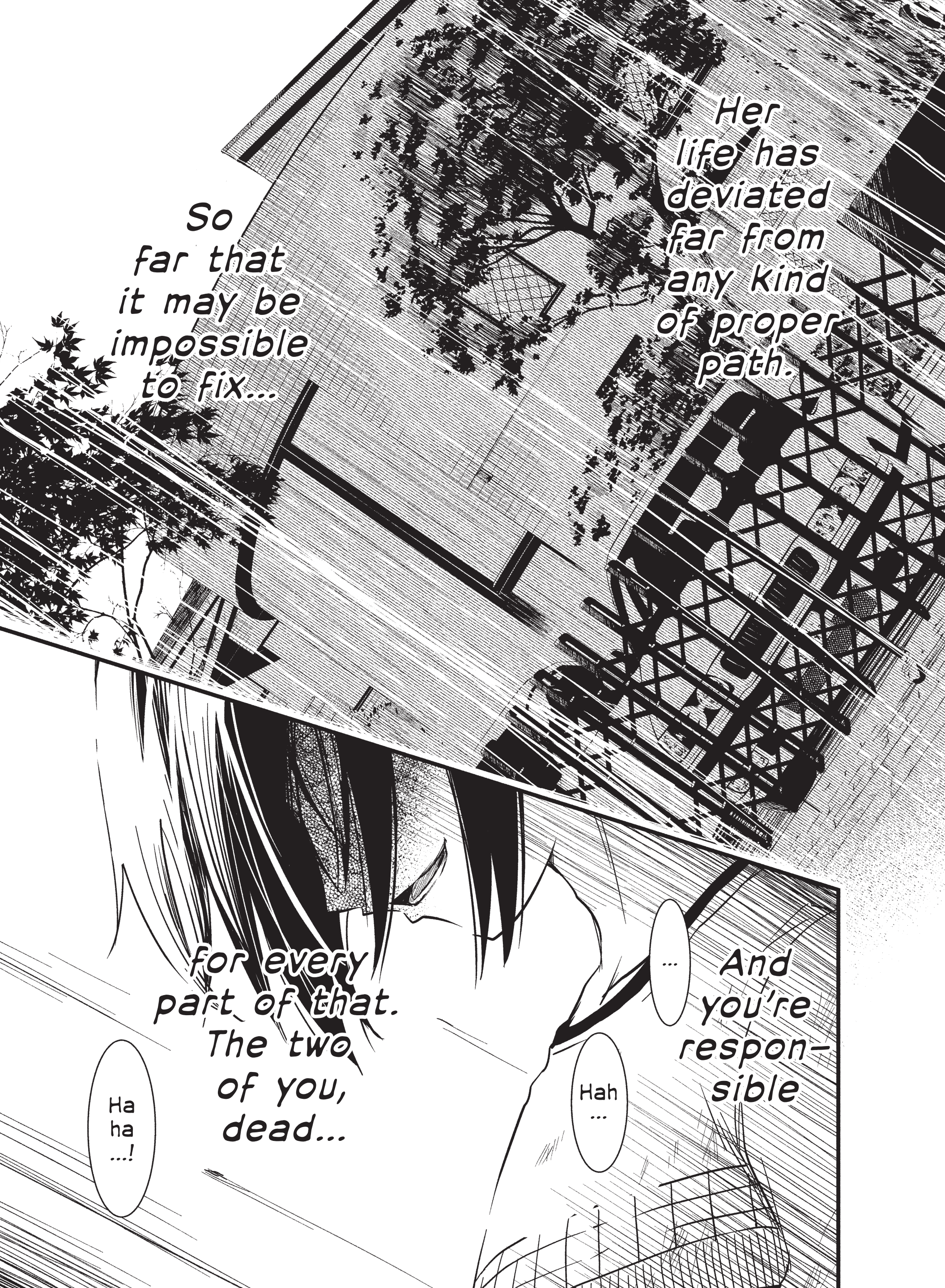


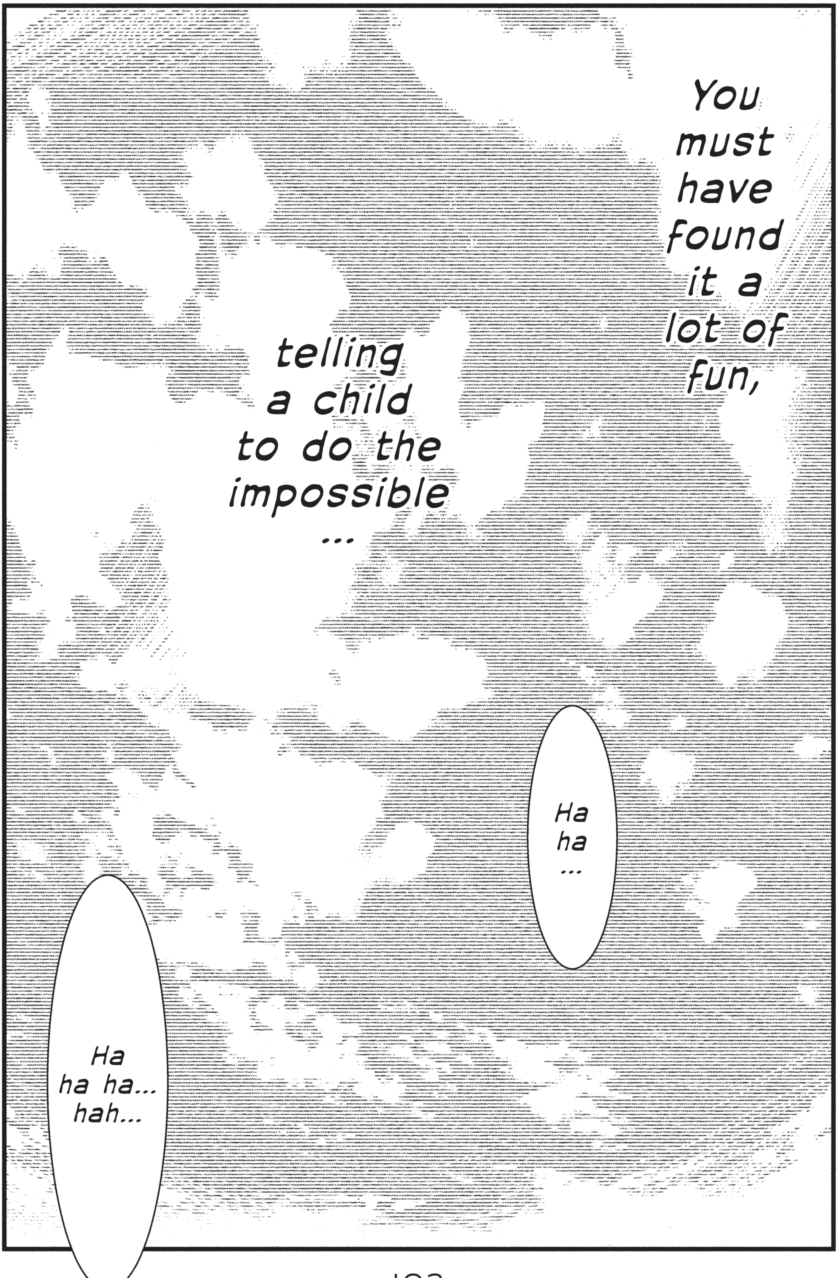


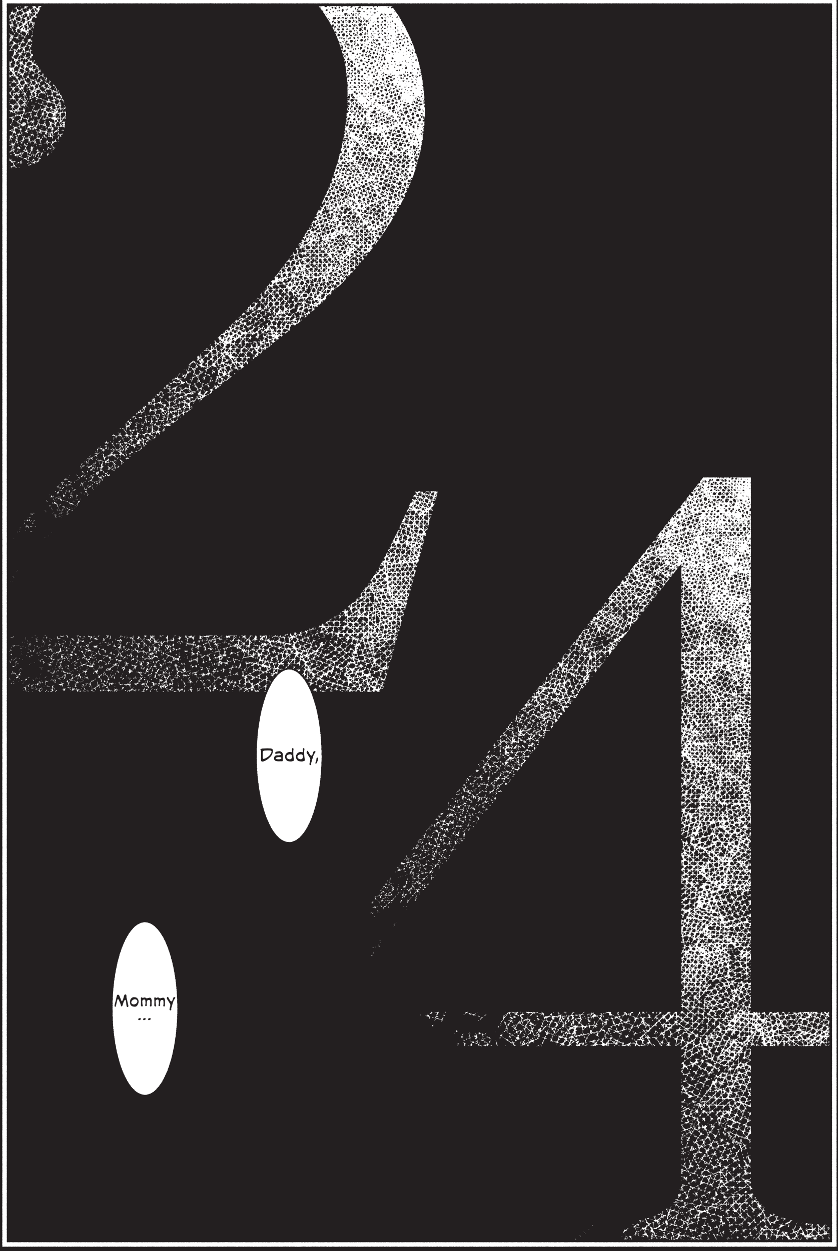

"Mommy and Daddy went away."
...Oh. So that's what she meant.
They killed each other and left her behind...

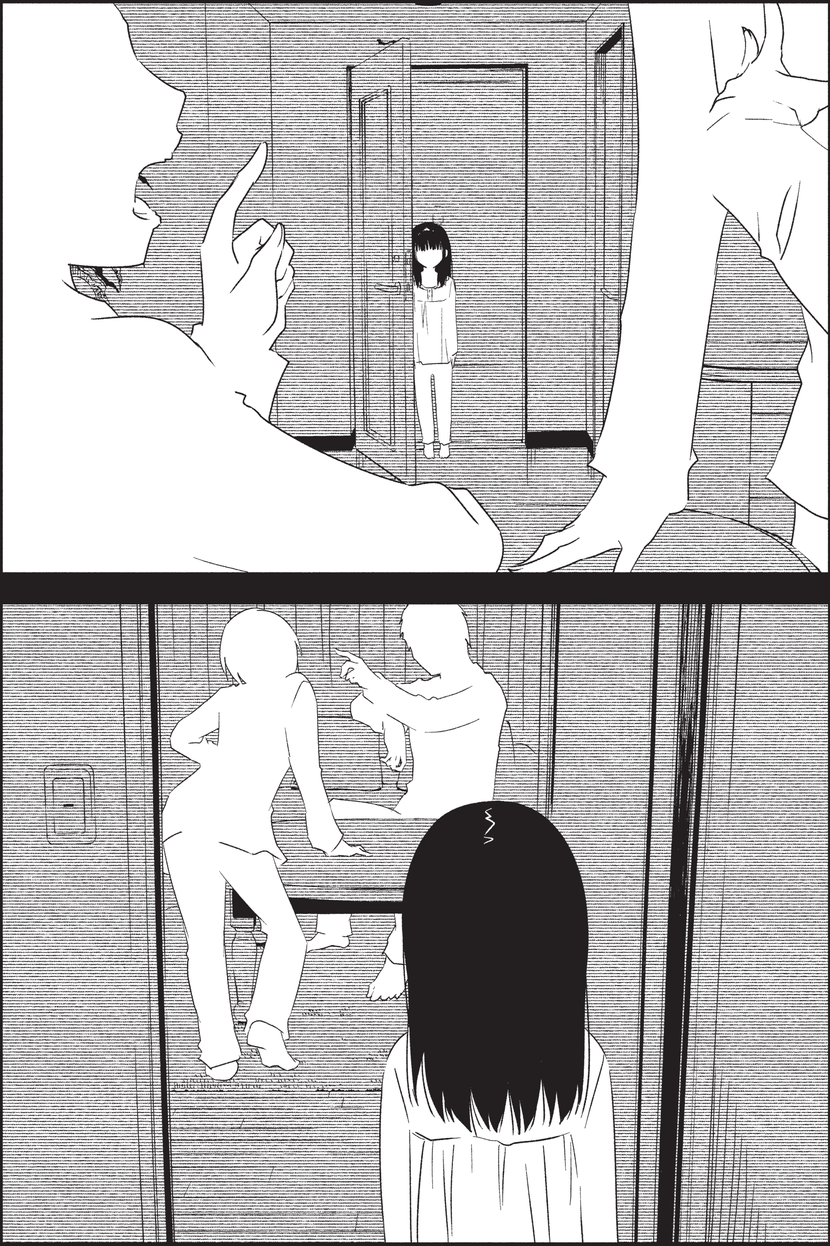

ふわ‥
"Every home has its own smell to it"? What was I going on about...?
That was nothing more than the smell of corpses.
What the hell are you doing dead?

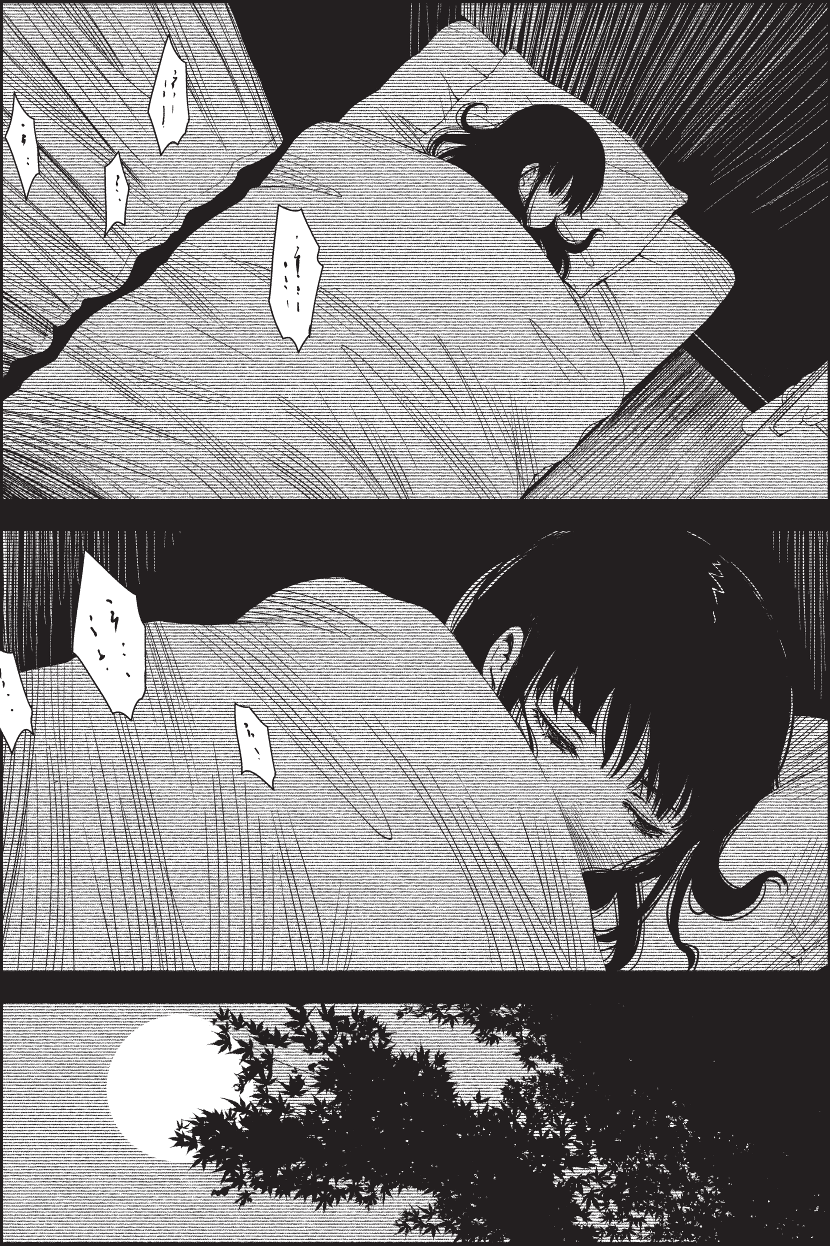

There are plenty of parents the world would be better off without...
But what's going to happen to U
if the two of you go and die like that...?
What's going to become of that girl's future?

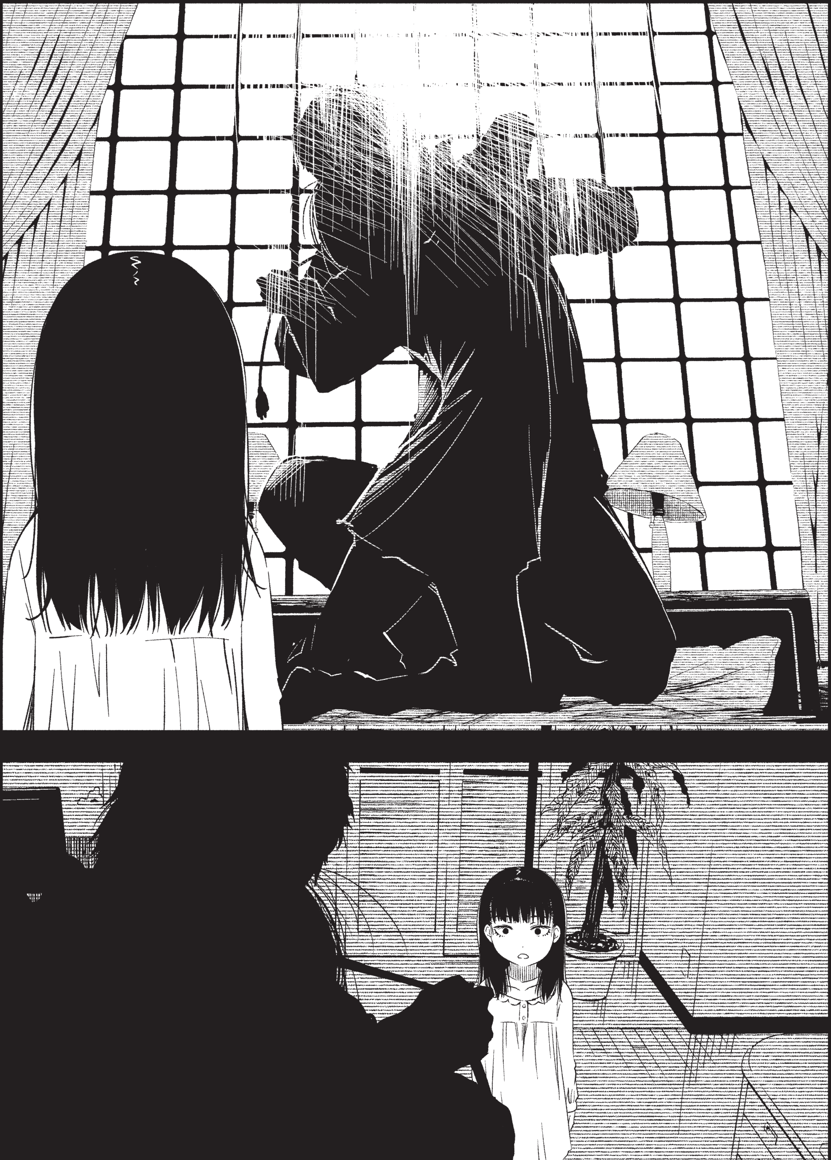

Her life has deviated far from any kind of proper path.
So far that it may be impossible to fix...
And you're responsible
...
for every part of that. The two of you, dead...
Hah...
Ha ha...!

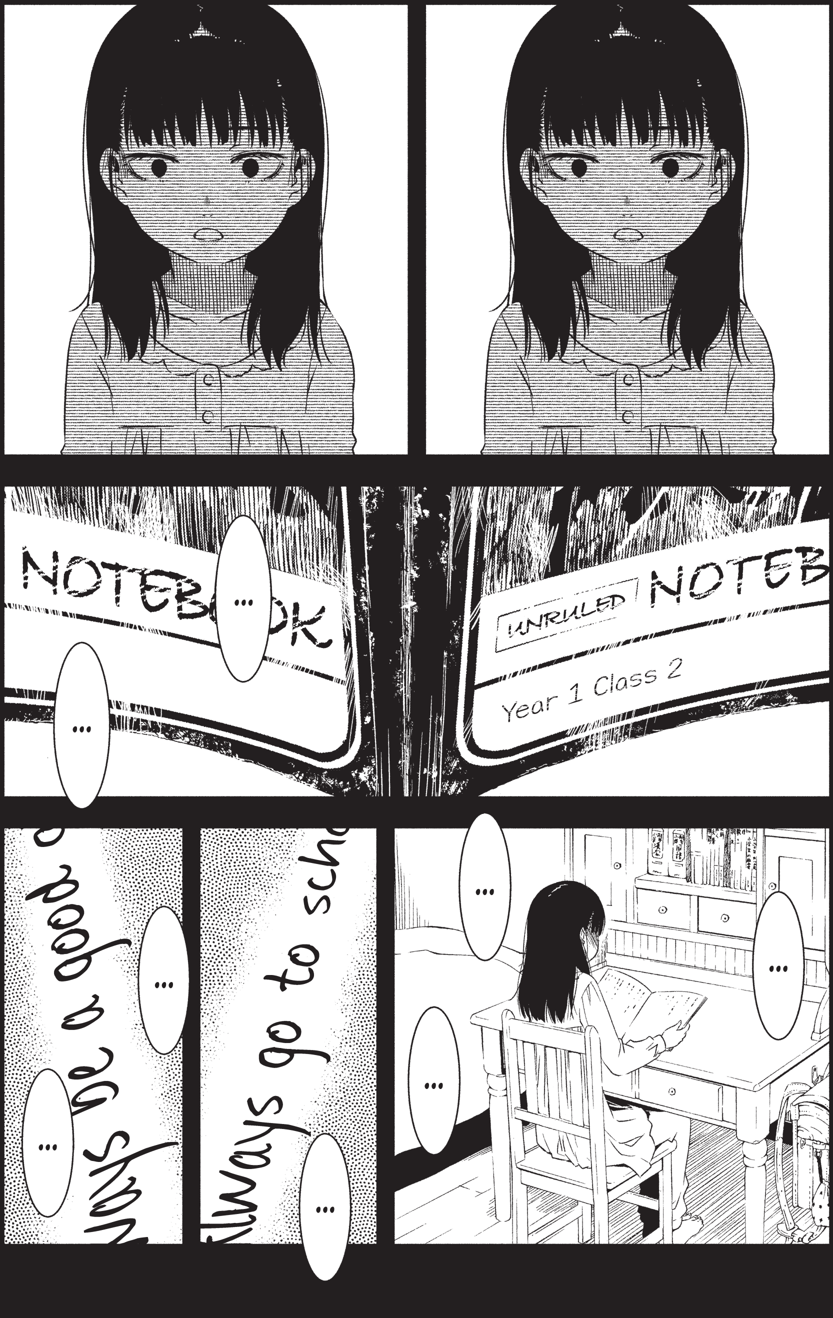

You must have found it a lot of fun,
telling a child to do the impossible...
Ha ha...
Ha ha ha... hah...

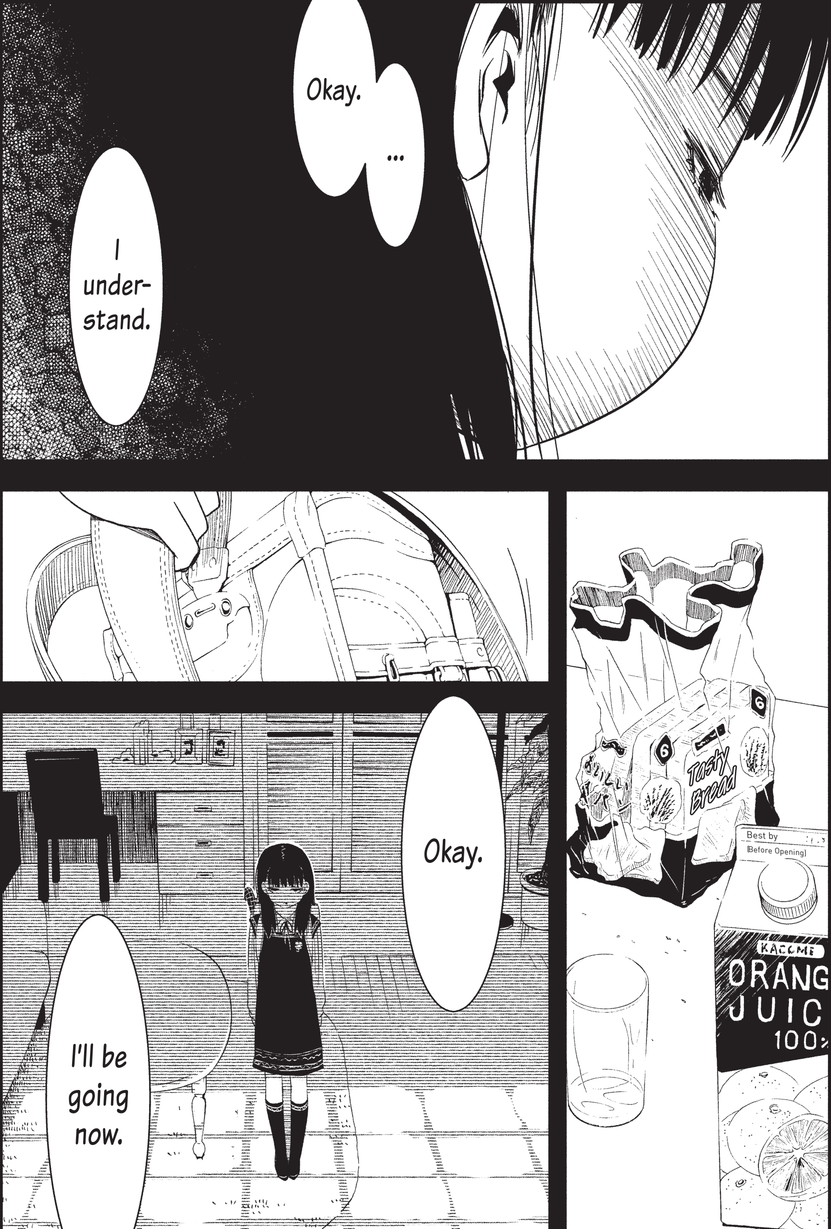

24
Daddy,
Mommy
...

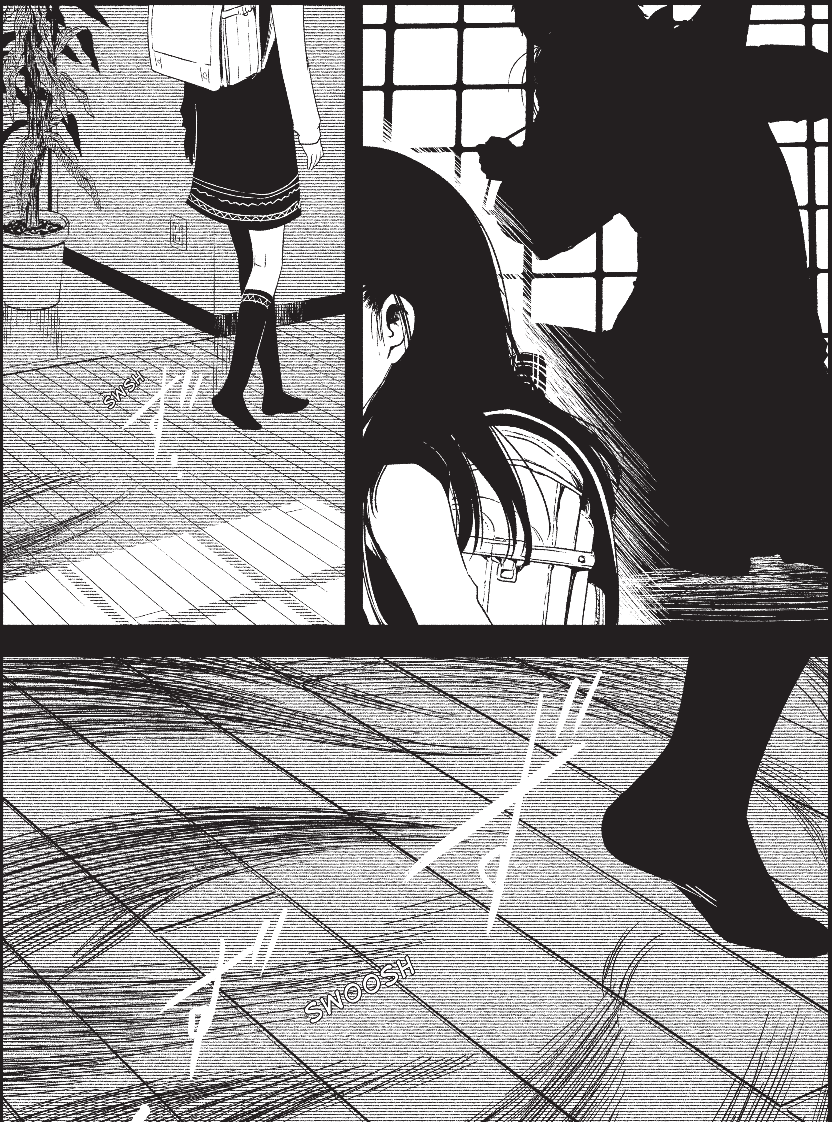


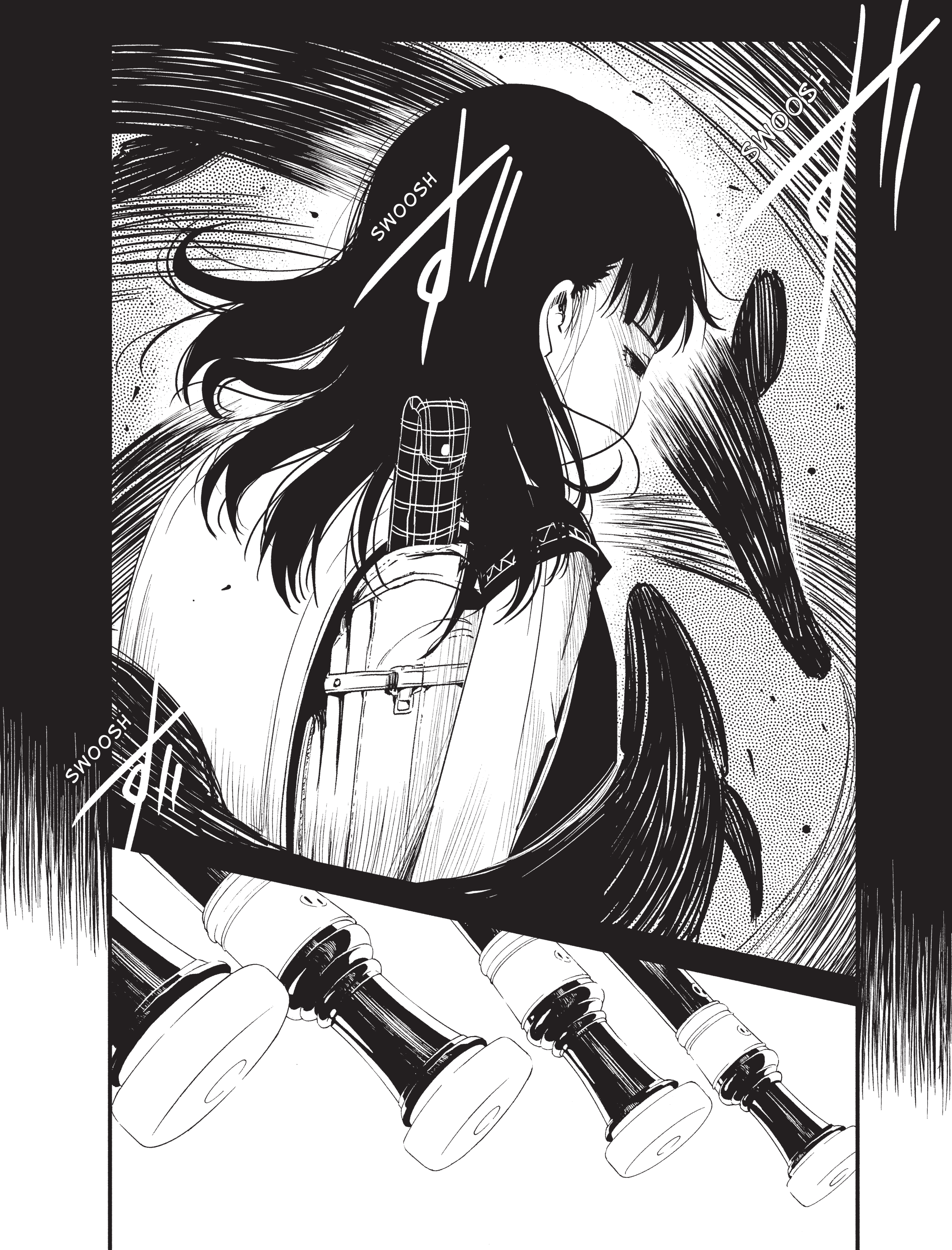

ん…!!
え!!
ん…
ぅ…
ふ…!
う…、いょ…
ん…

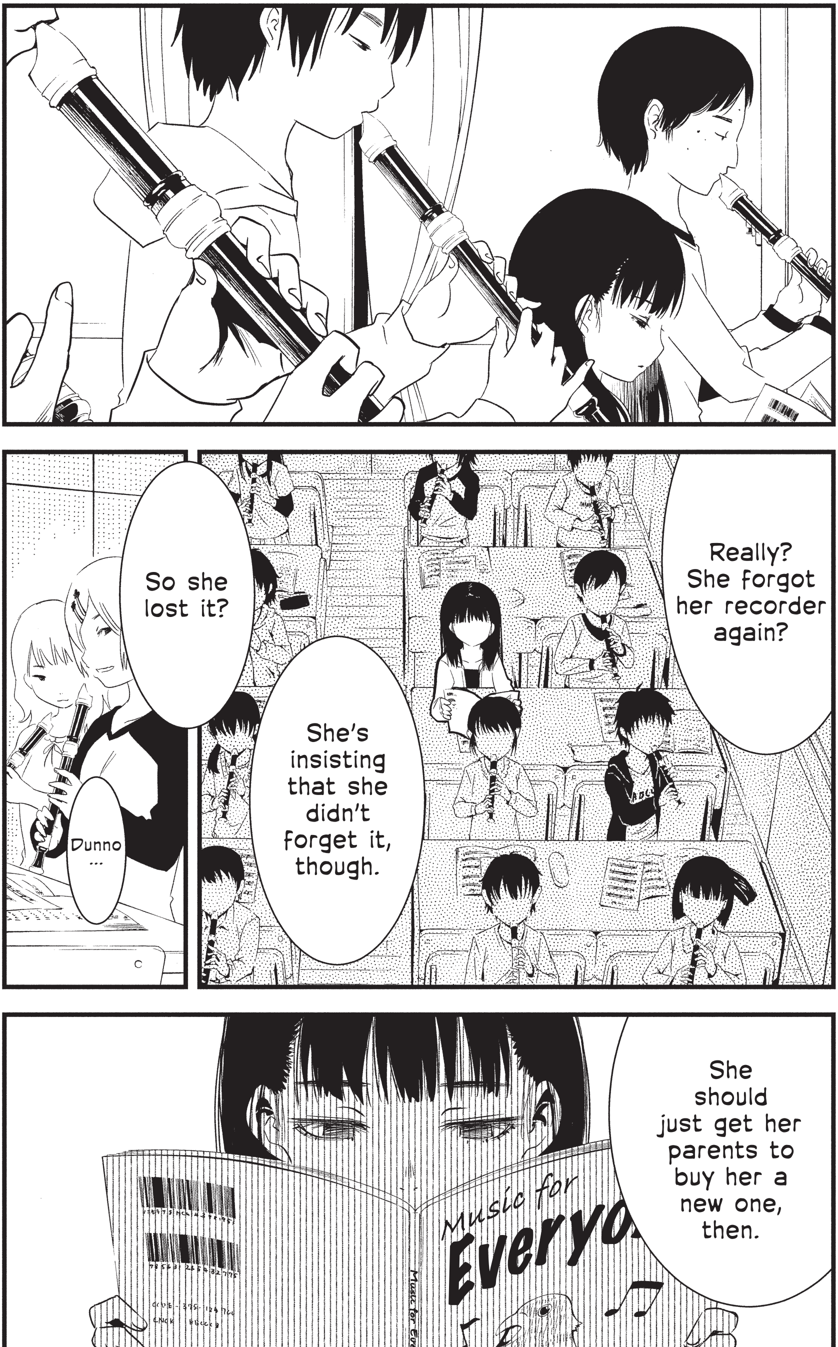


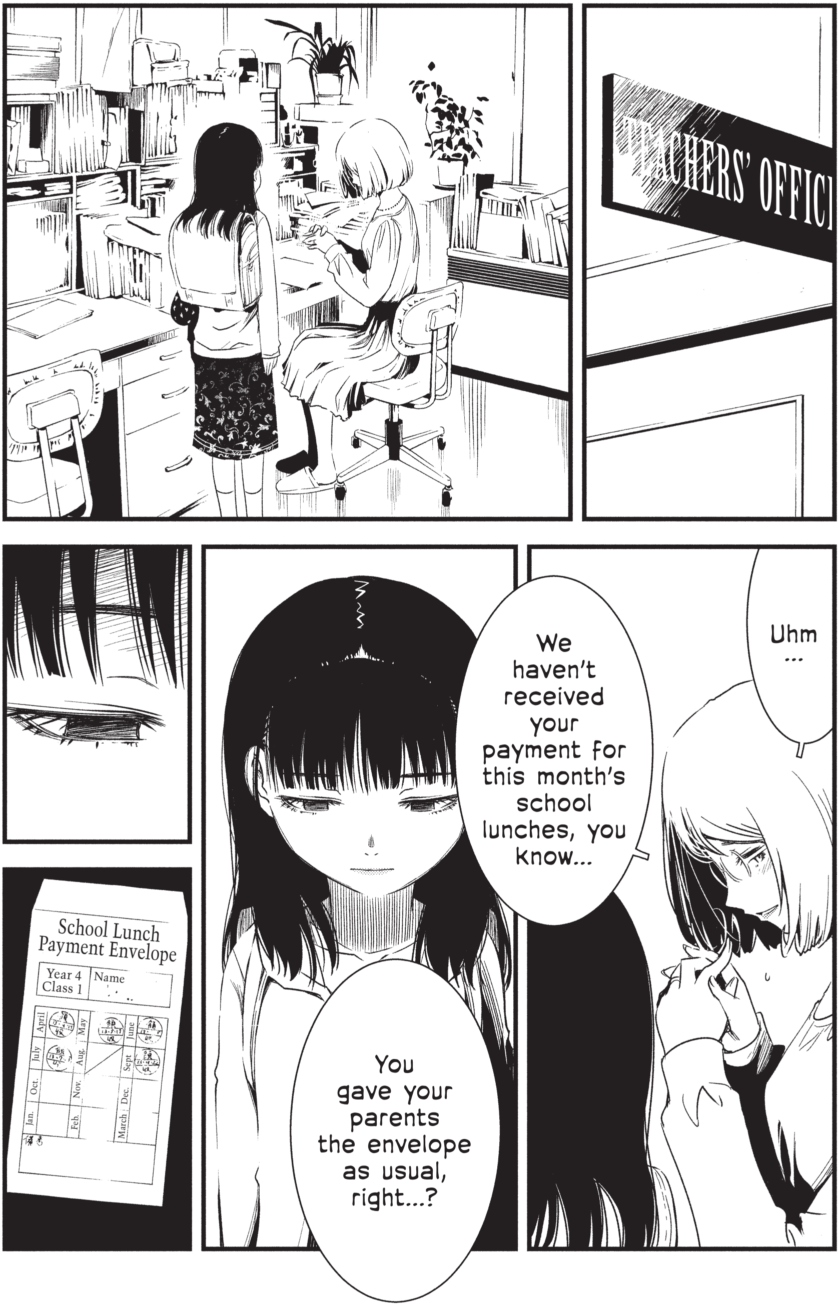

UNRULED
NOTEB
Year 1 Class 2
NOTEBOOK
…
…
…
…
…
…
lways go to scho
…
ways be a good
…
…

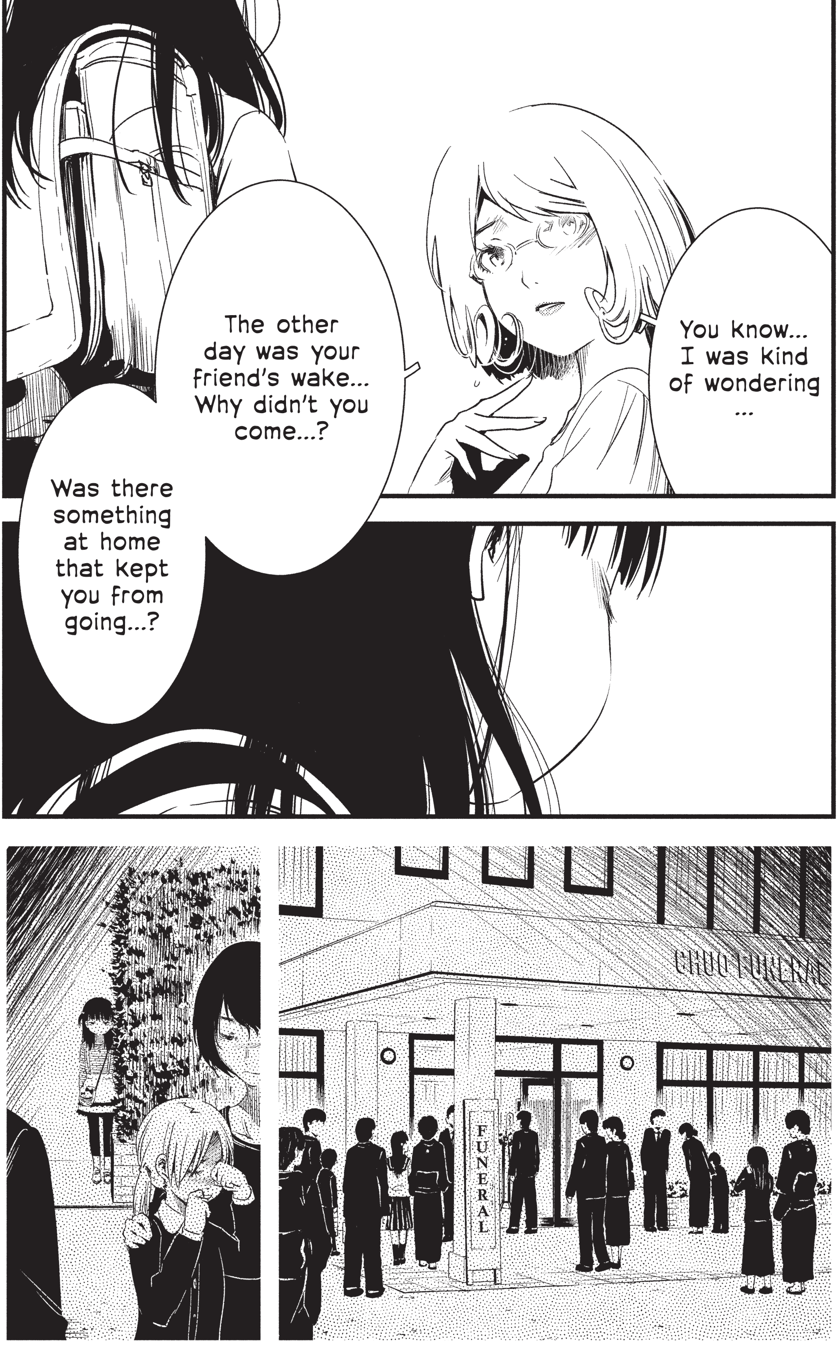

Okay.
...
I understand.
Tasty Bread
Best by
(Before Opening)
KAGOME
ORANG
JUIC
100
Okay.
I'll be going now.

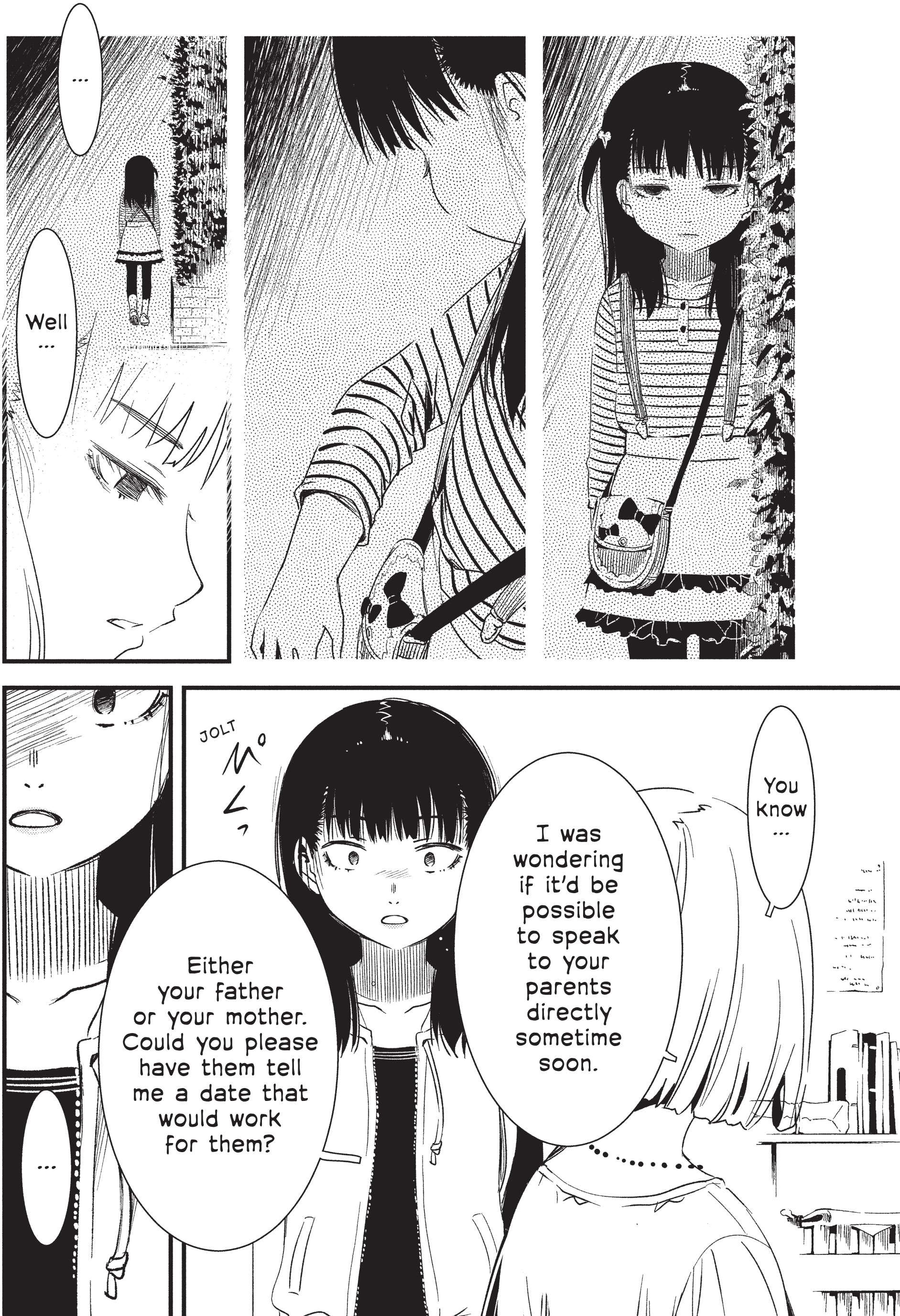

SWSH
SWOOSH

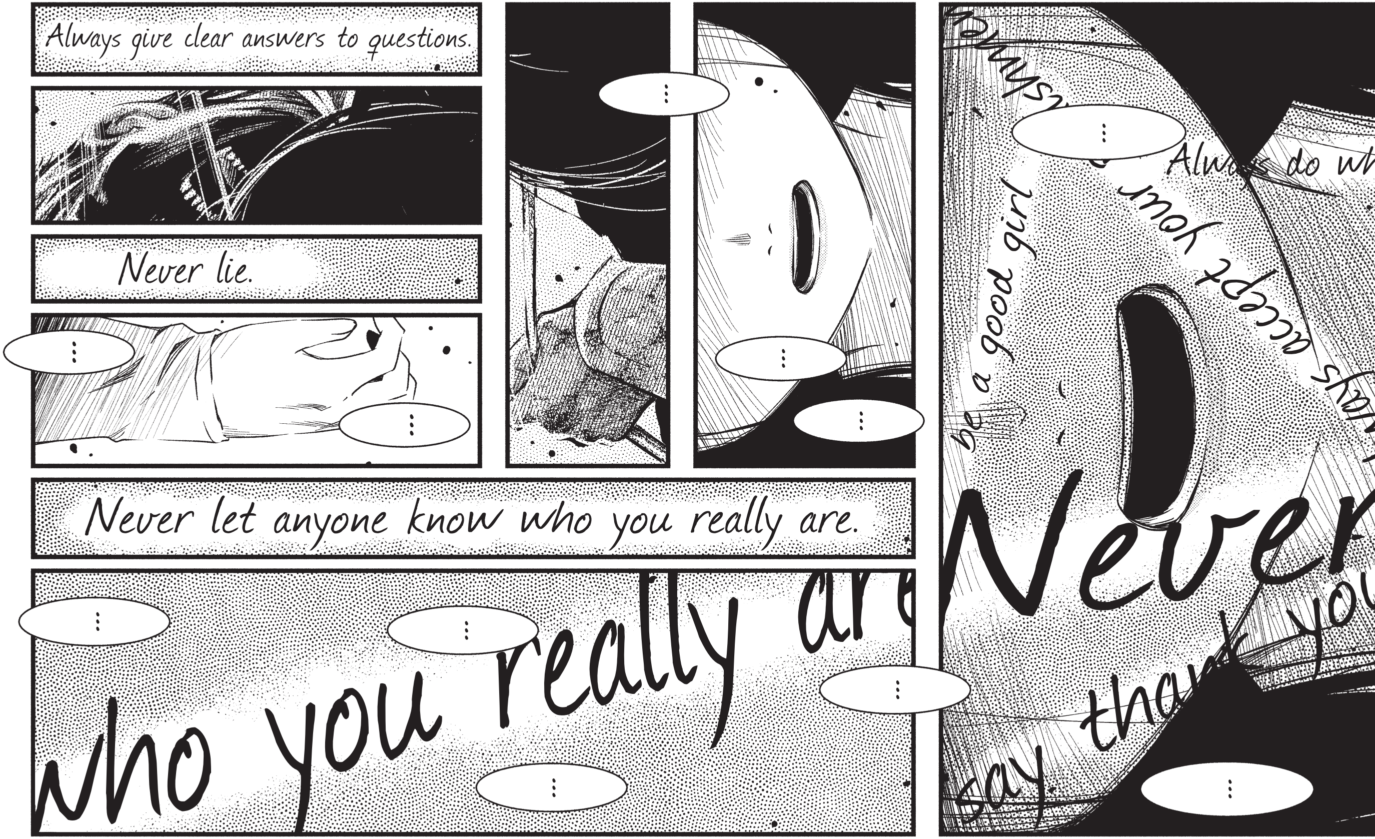

SWOOSH
SWOOSH
SWOOSH

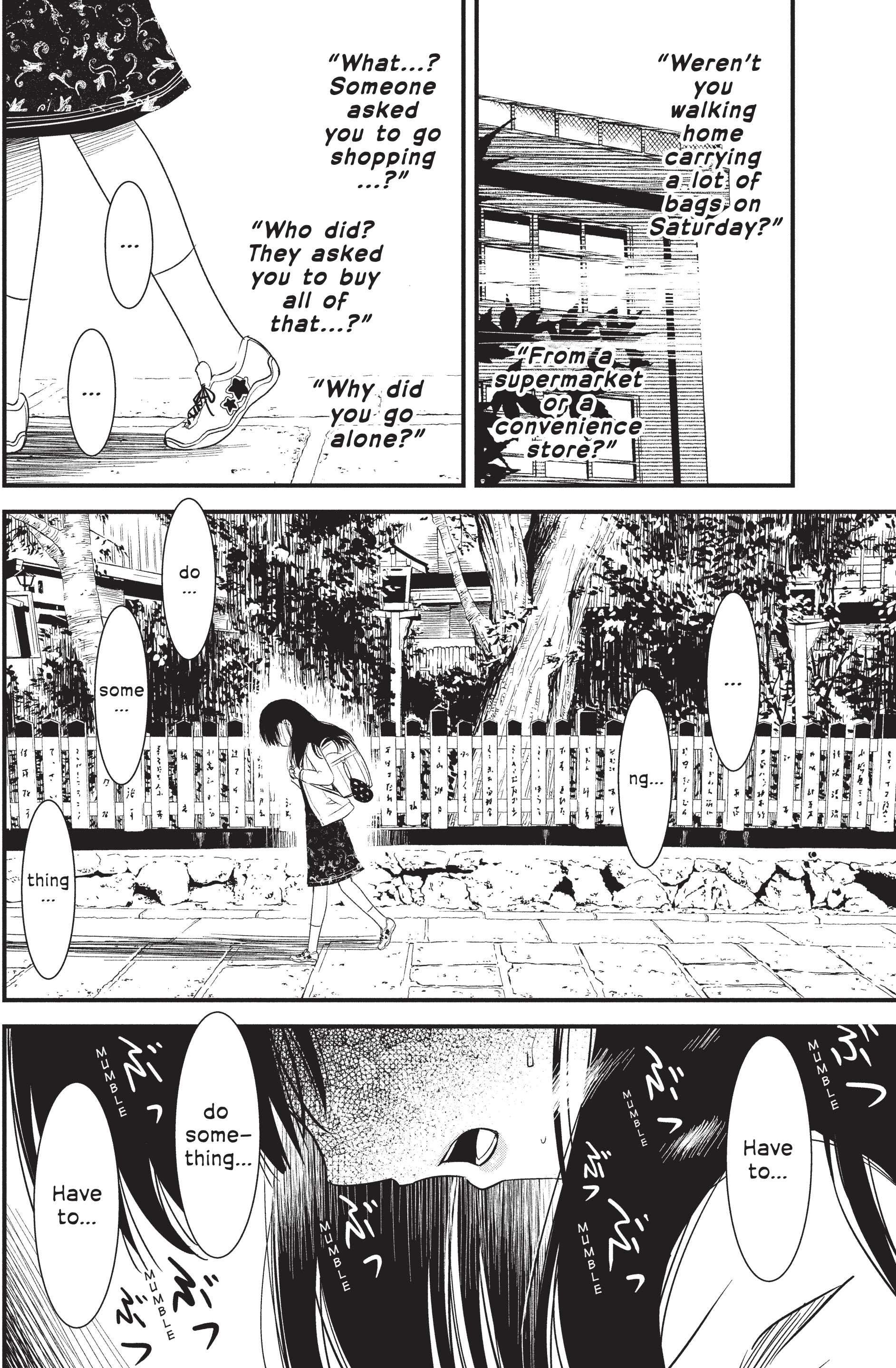

Really? She forgot her recorder again?
She's insisting that she didn't forget it, though.
So she lost it?
Dunno...
She should just get her parents to buy her a new one, then.
Music for Everyo

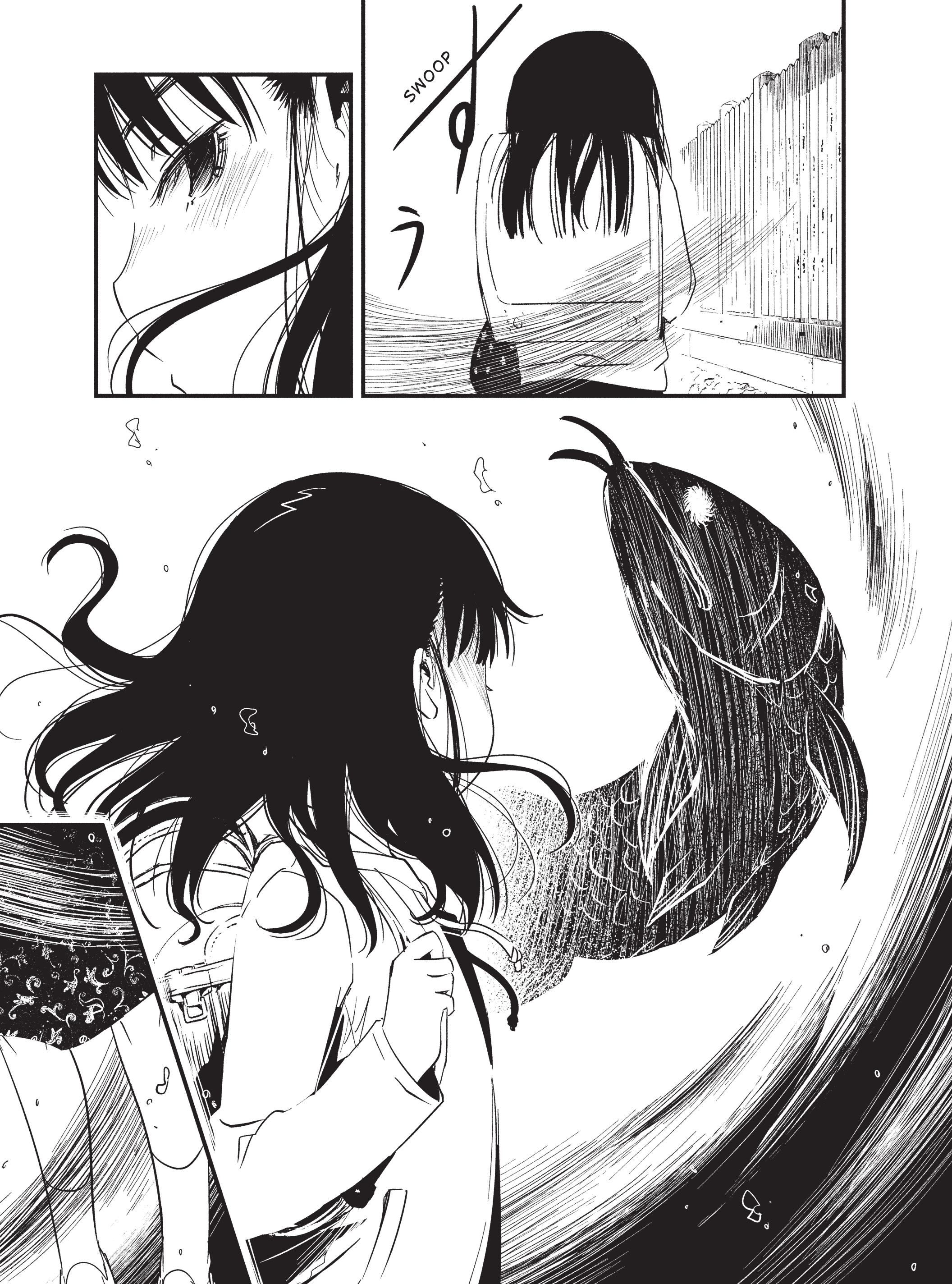

TEACHERS' OFFIC
Uhm ...
We haven't received your payment for this month's school lunches, you know...
You gave your parents the envelope as usual, right...?
School Lunch Payment Envelope
Year 4 Class 1
Name
April
May
June
July
Aug.
Sept.
Oct.
Nov.
Dec.
Jan.
Feb.
March

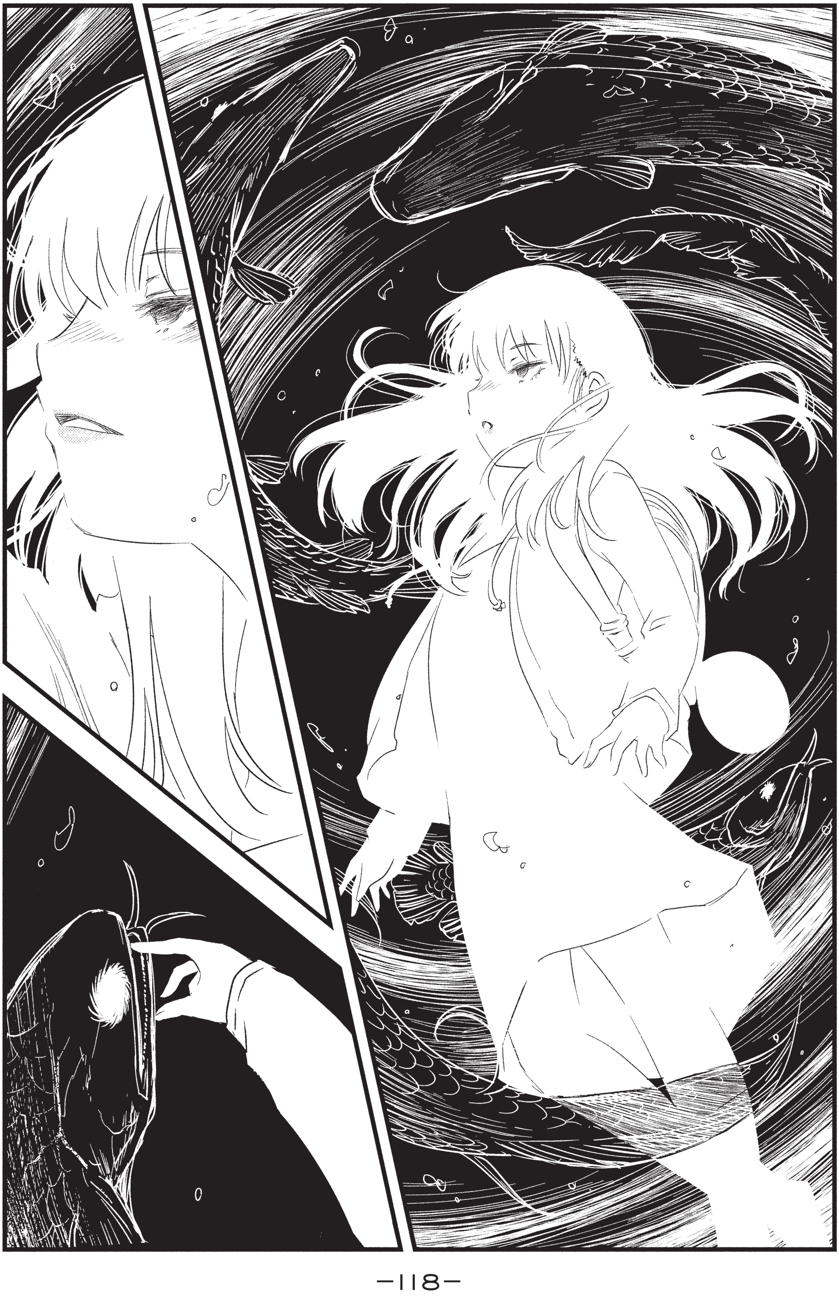

You know... I was kind of wondering ...
The other day was your friend's wake... Why didn't you come...?
Was there something at home that kept you from going...?
CHUO FUNERAL
FUNERAL

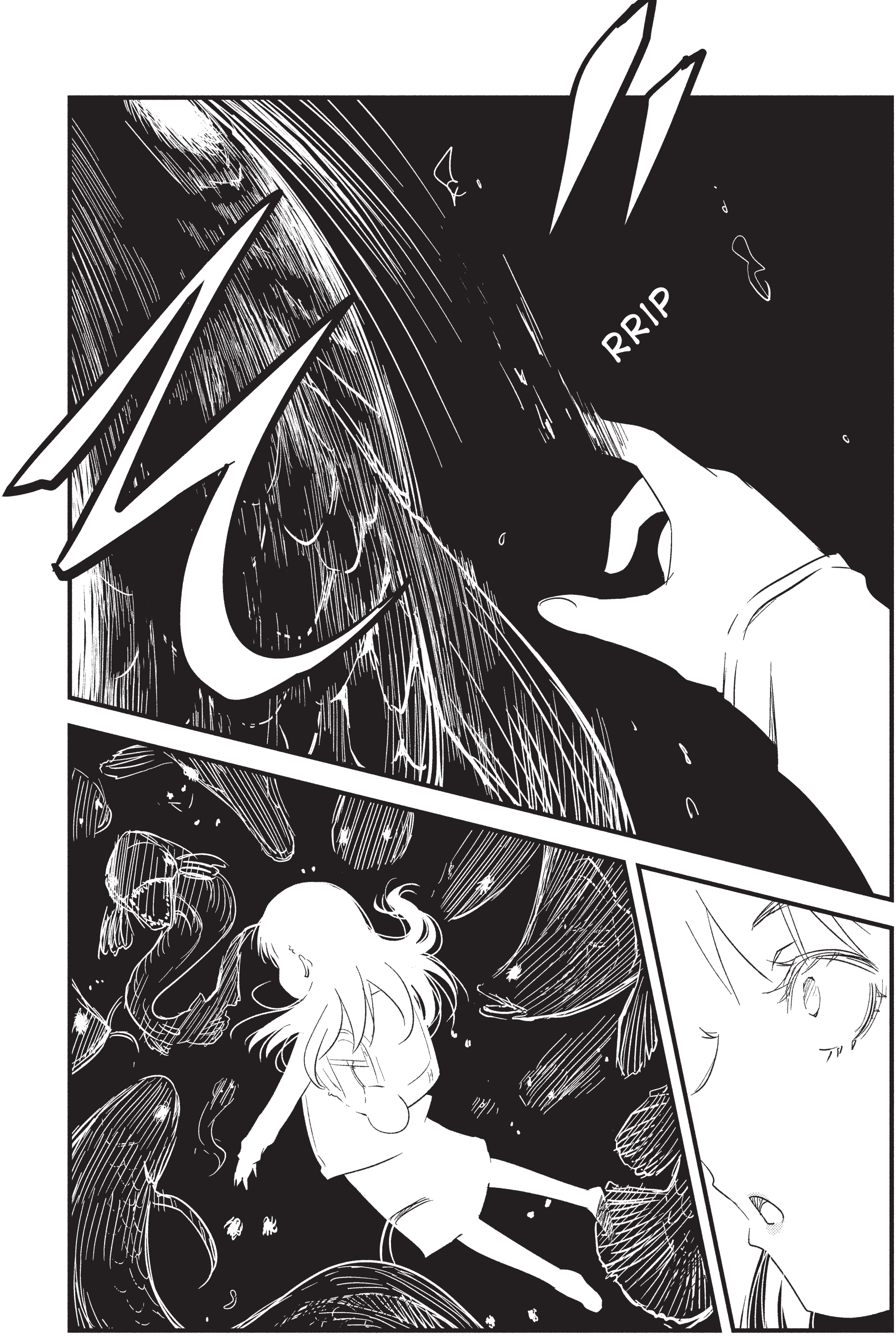

...
Well ...
You know ...
I was wondering if it'd be possible to speak to your parents directly sometime soon.
JOLT
Either your father or your mother. Could you please have them tell me a date that would work for them?
...

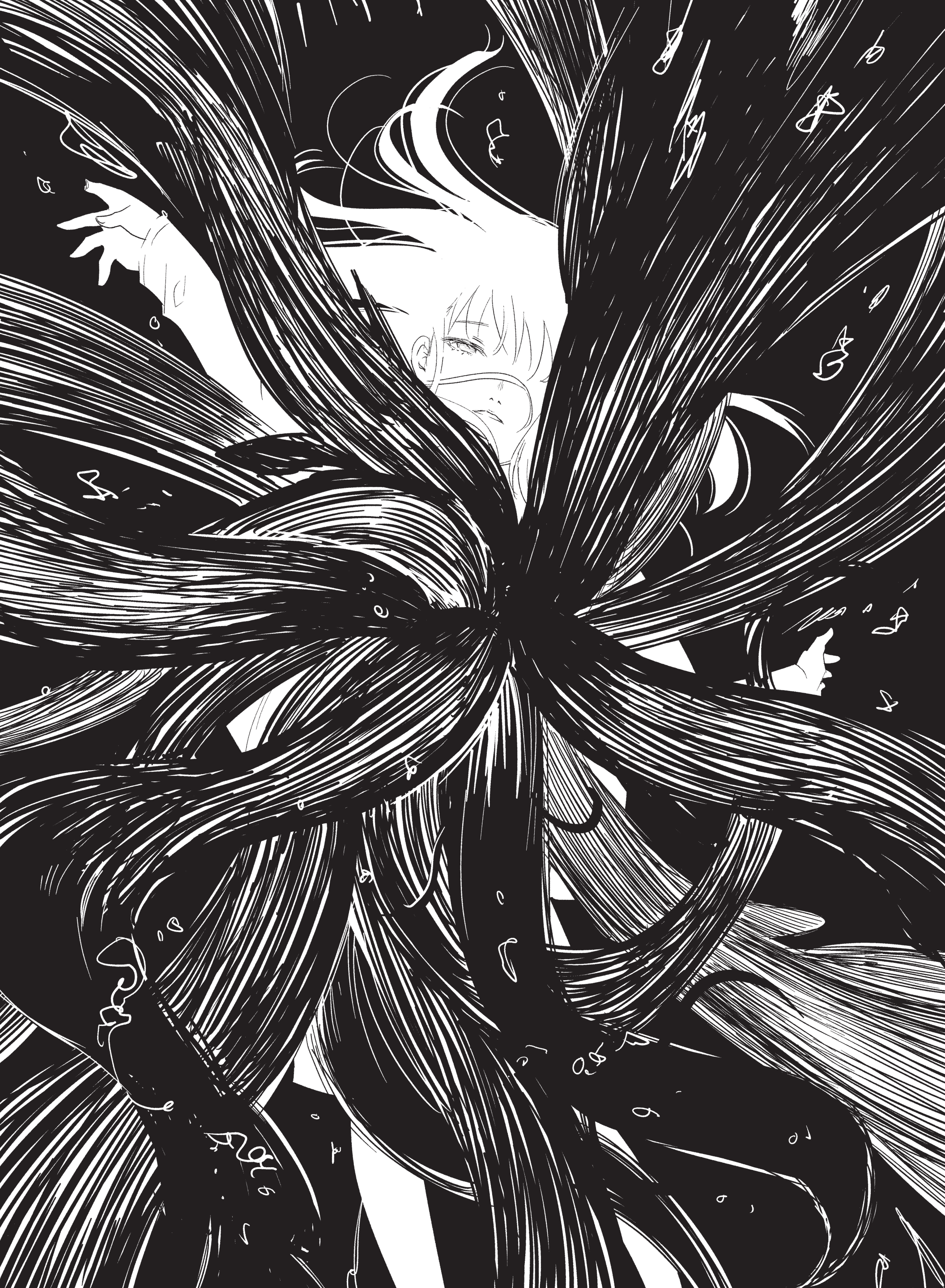

Always give clear answers to questions.
Never lie.
…
…
…
…
…
Never let anyone know who you really are.
…
…
…
…
who you really are
…
…
be a good girl
Always accept your
ishment
Always do wh
Never
say thank you

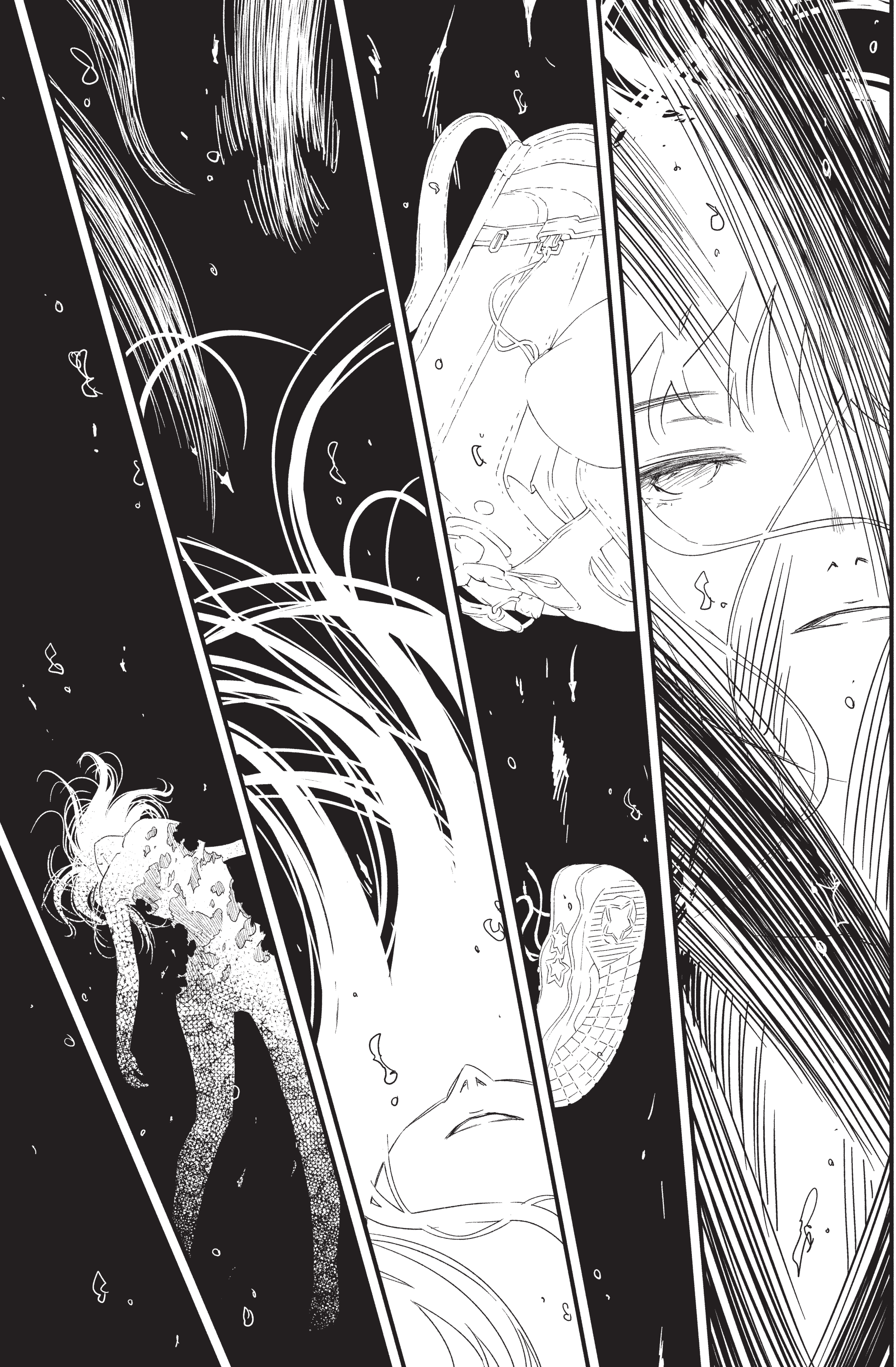

"Weren't you walking home carrying a lot of bags on Saturday?"
"From a supermarket or a convenience store?"
"What...? Someone asked you to go shopping ...?"
"Who did? They asked you to buy all of that...?"
"Why did you go alone?"
...
...
...
ng...
do...
some...
thing...
ぶつ MUMBLE
Have to...
ぶつ MUMBLE
ぶつ MUMBLE
ぶつ MUMBLE
do some-thing...
ぶつ MUMBLE
Have to...
ぶつ MUMBLE

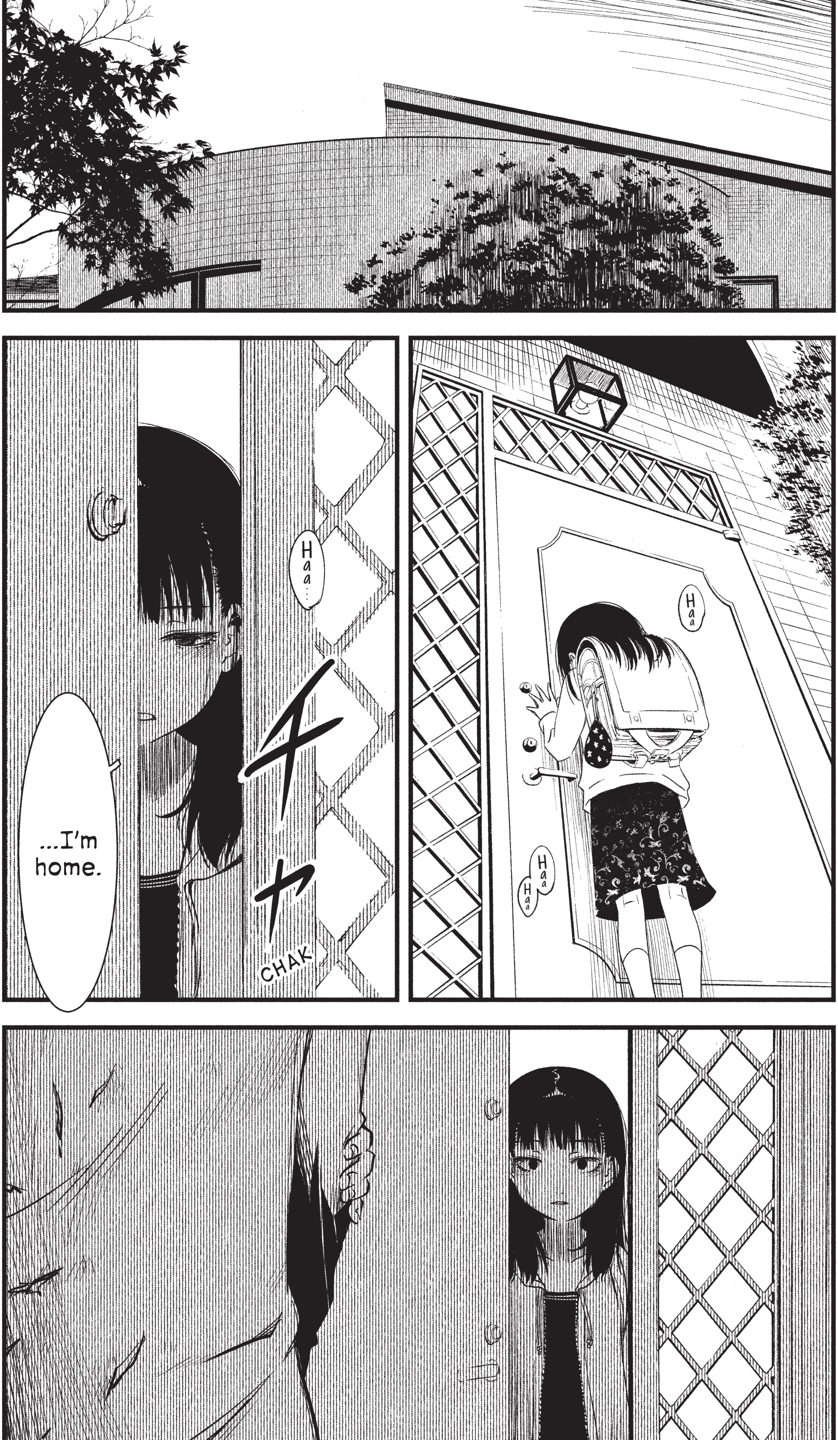

SWOOP
すぅ

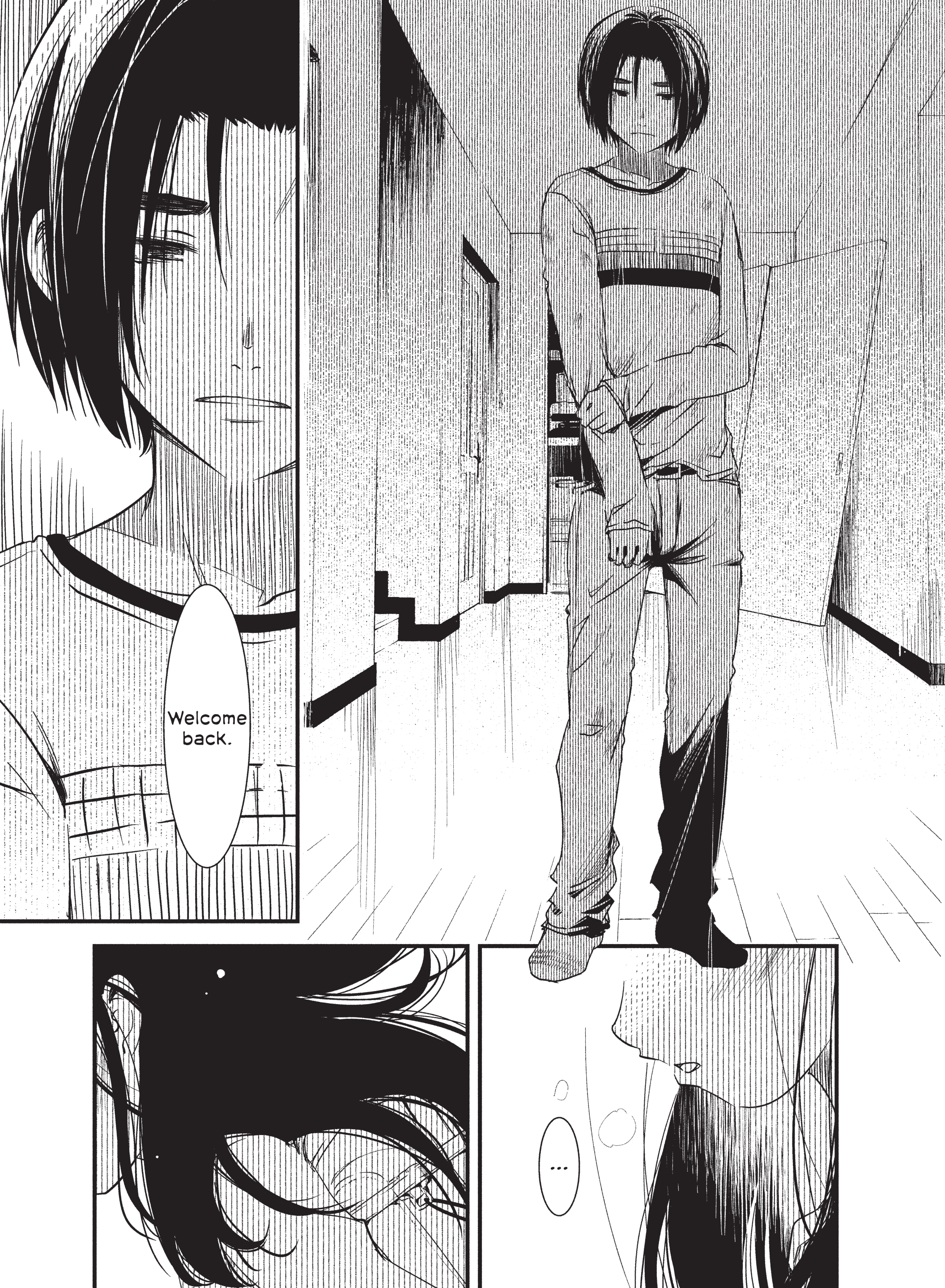


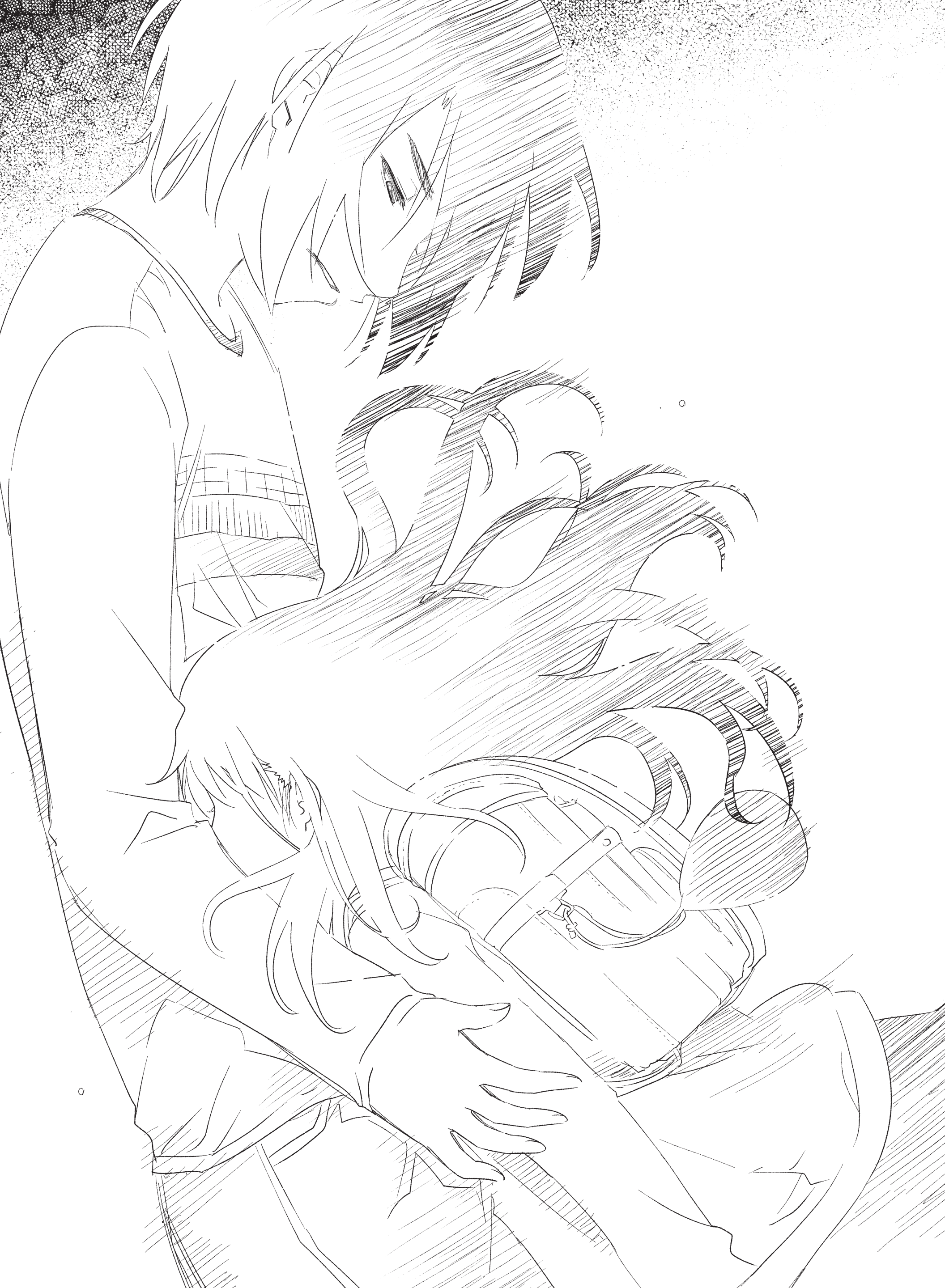

RRIP

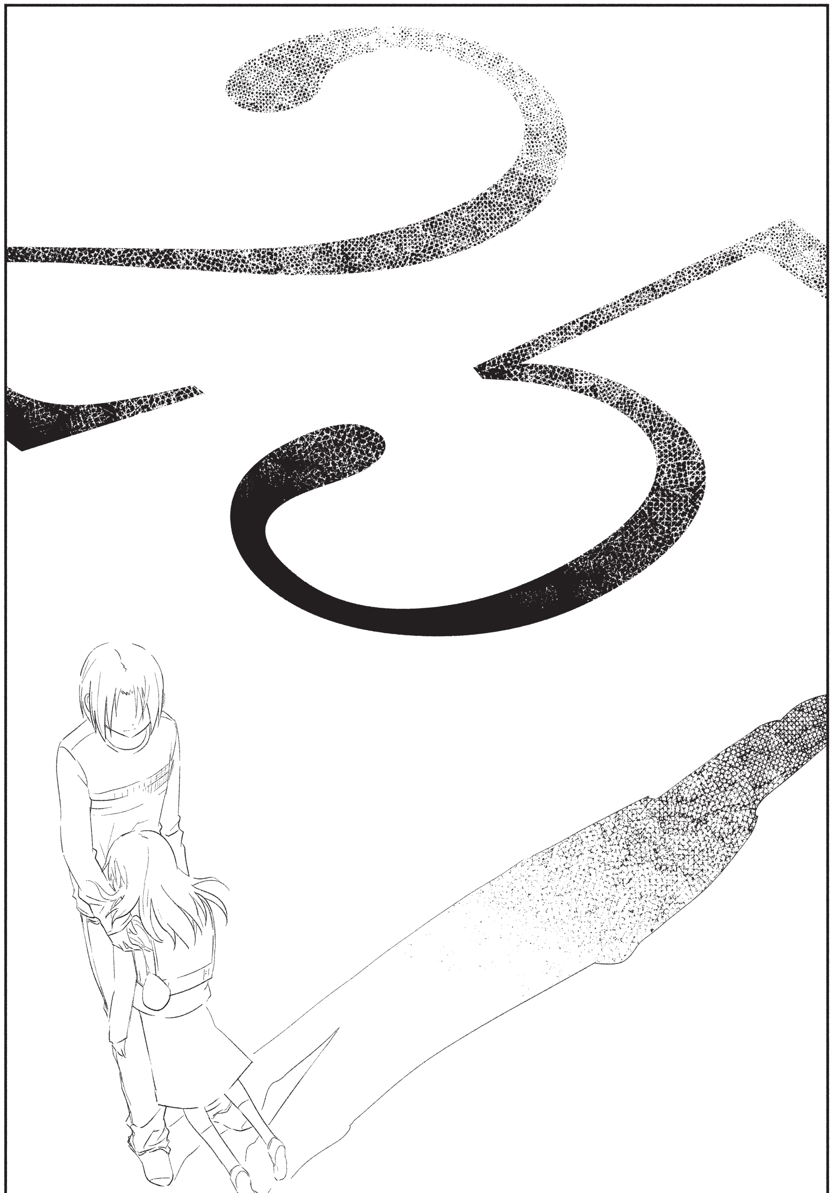


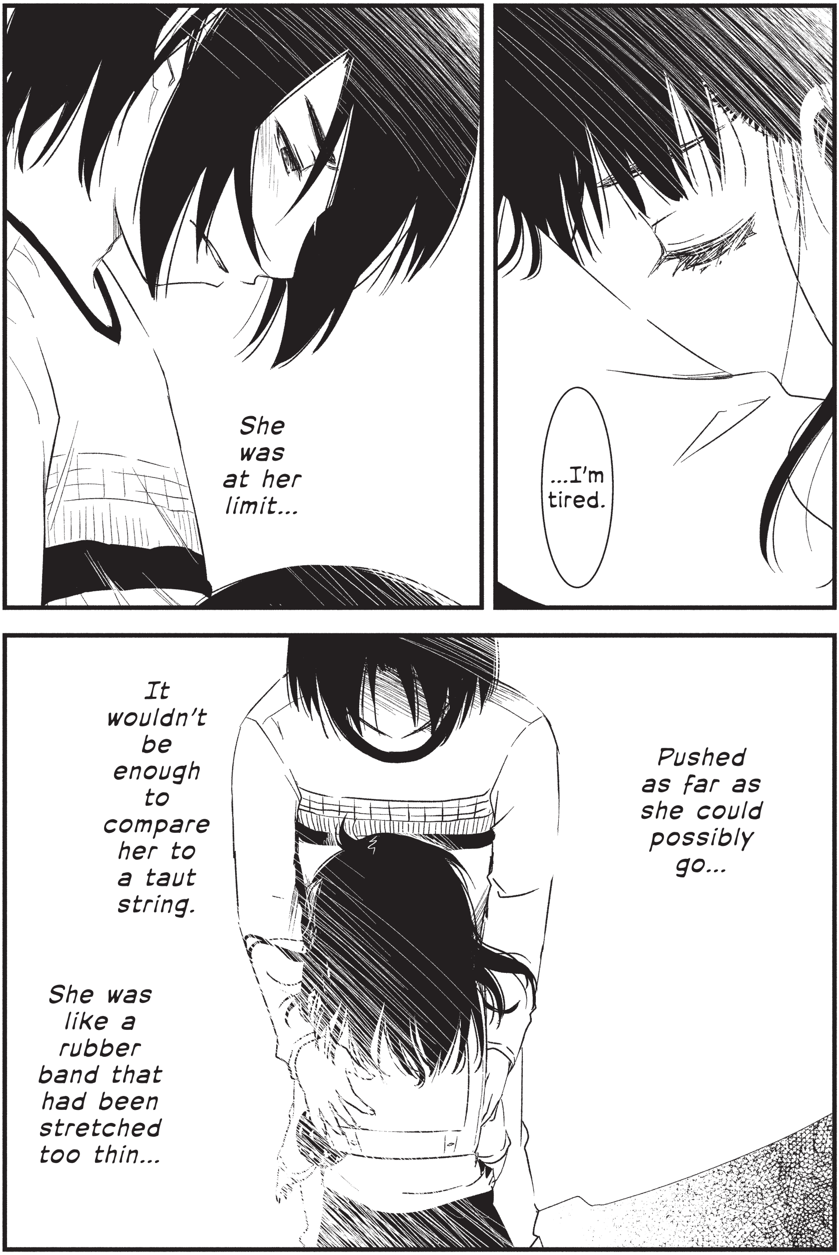


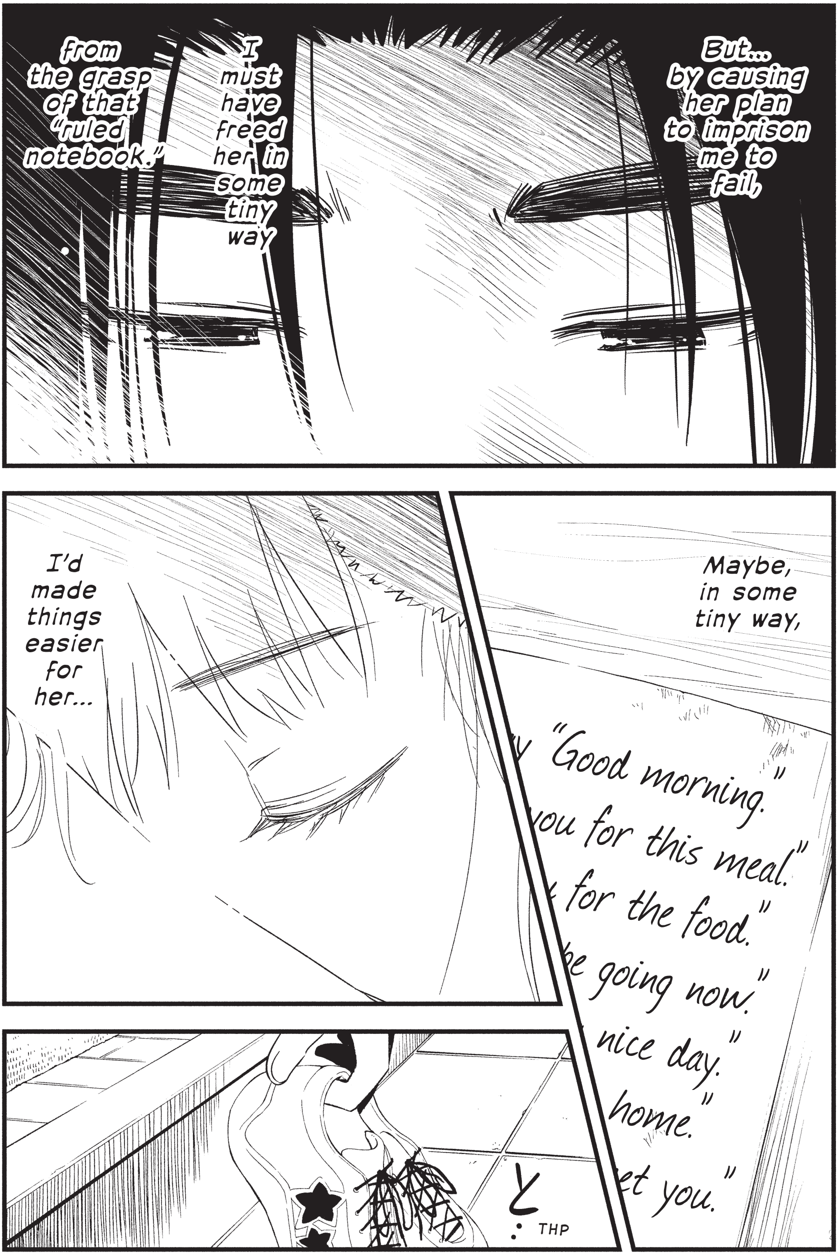

Haa
Haa
Haa
Haa...
チャ
CHAK
...I'm home.

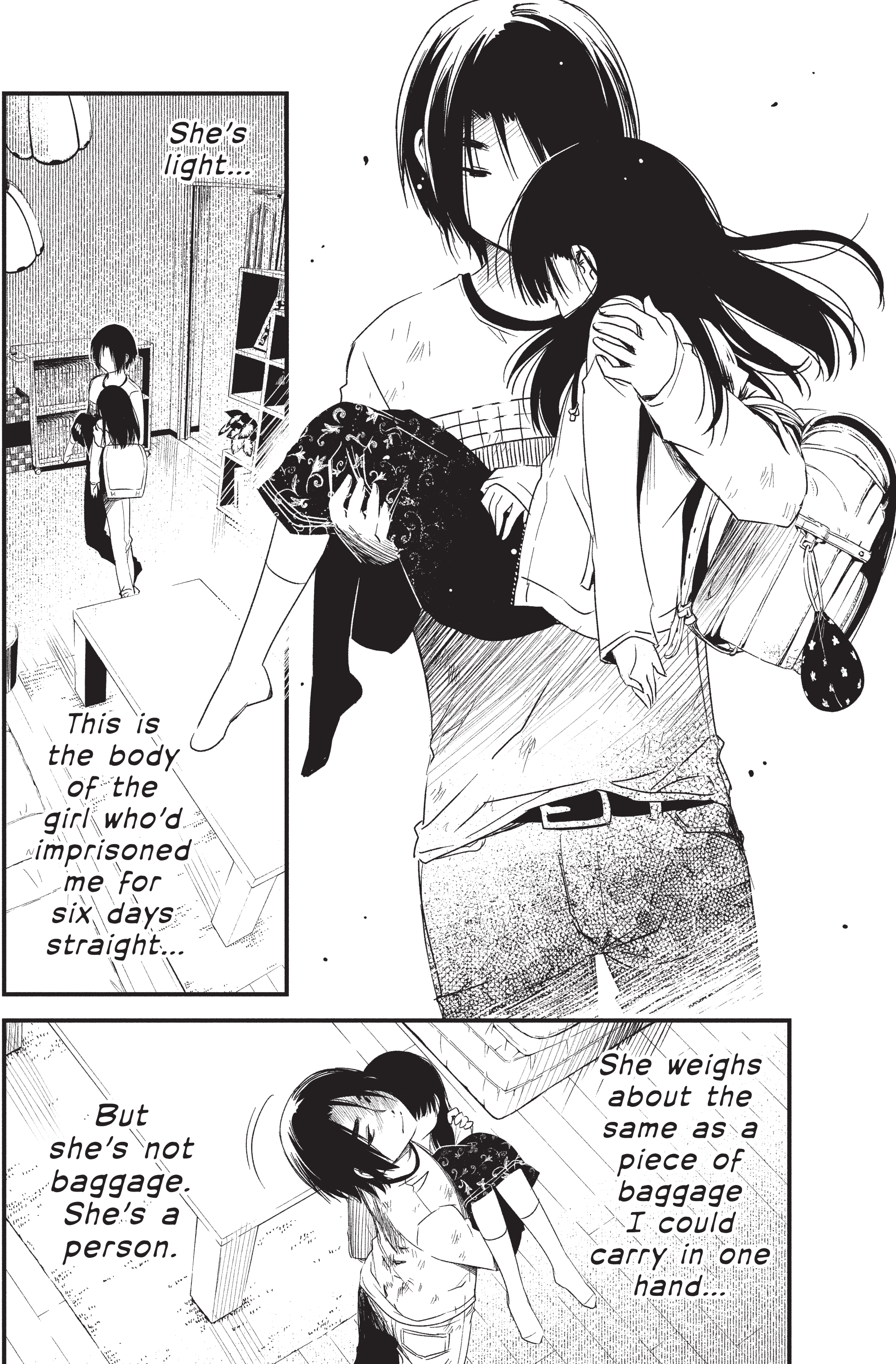

Welcome back.
...

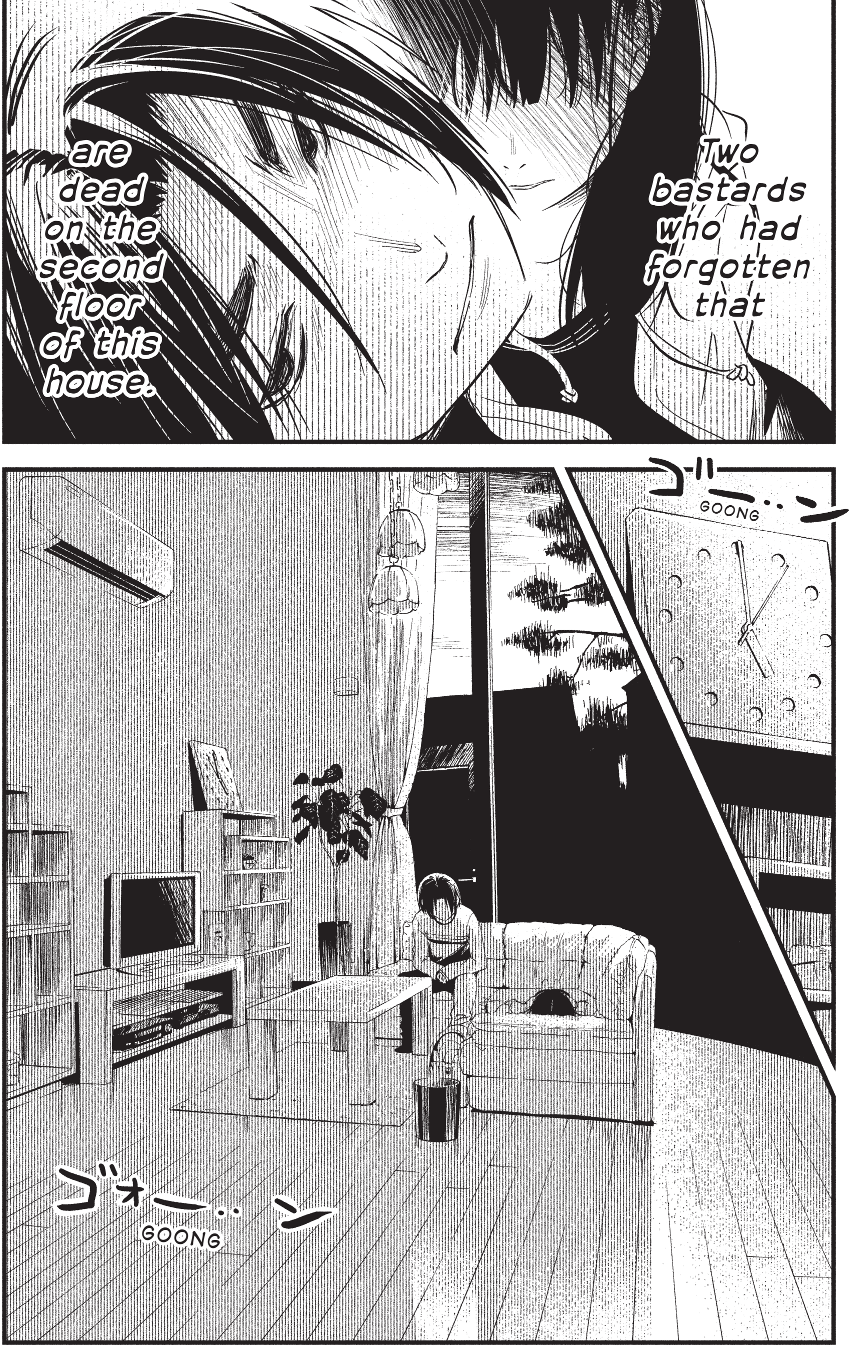


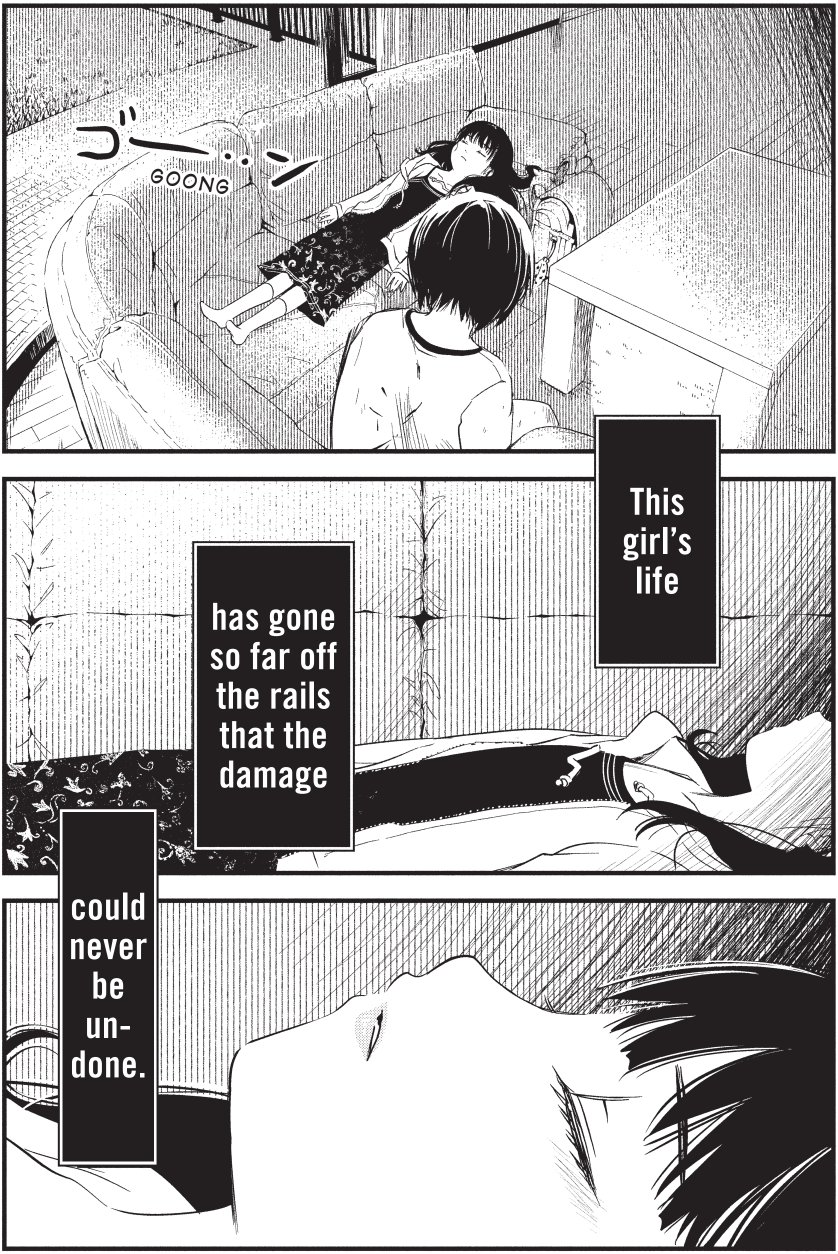

23

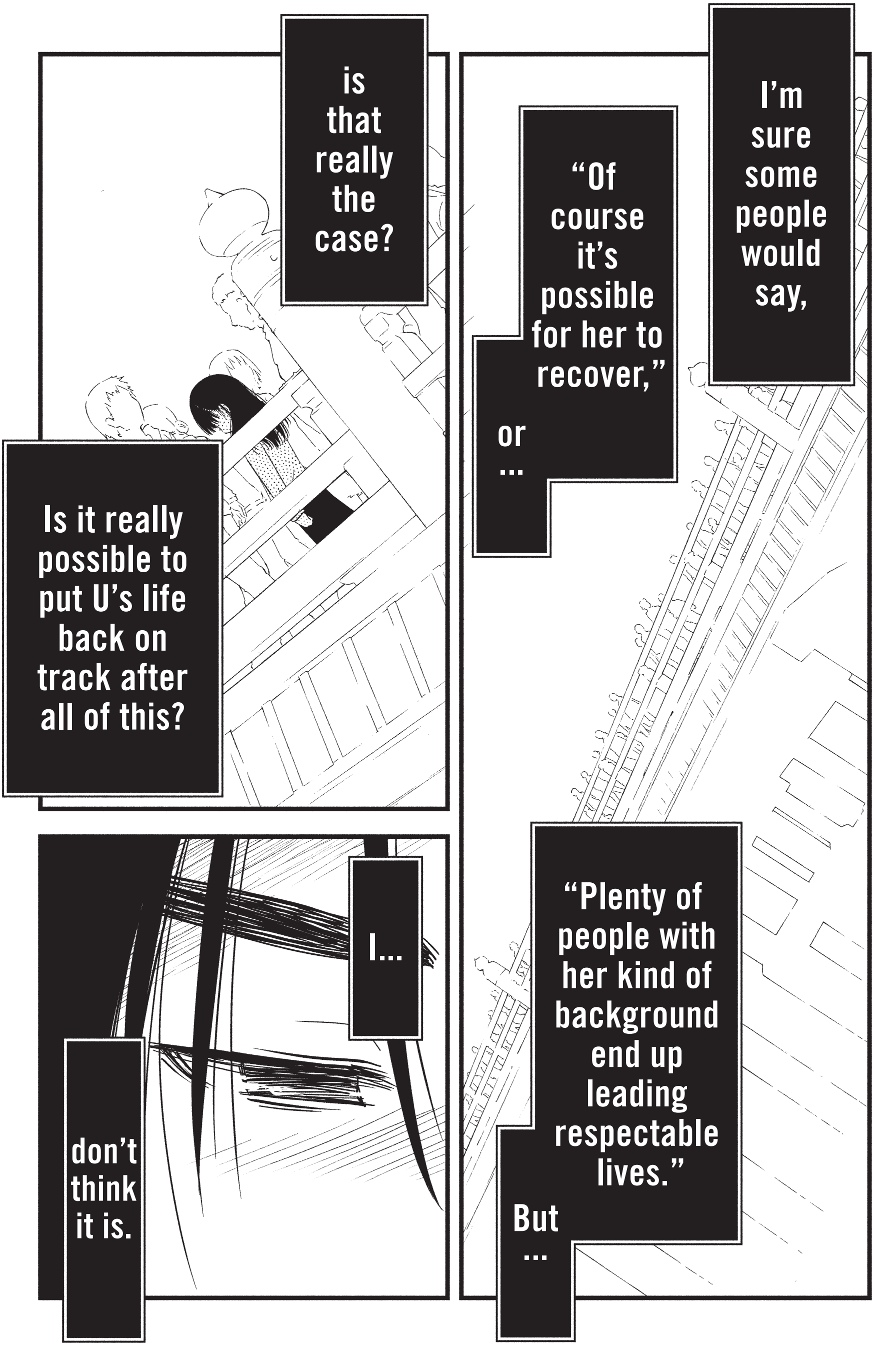

...I'm tired.
She was at her limit...
Pushed as far as she could possibly go...
It wouldn't be enough to compare her to a taut string.
She was like a rubber band that had been stretched too thin...

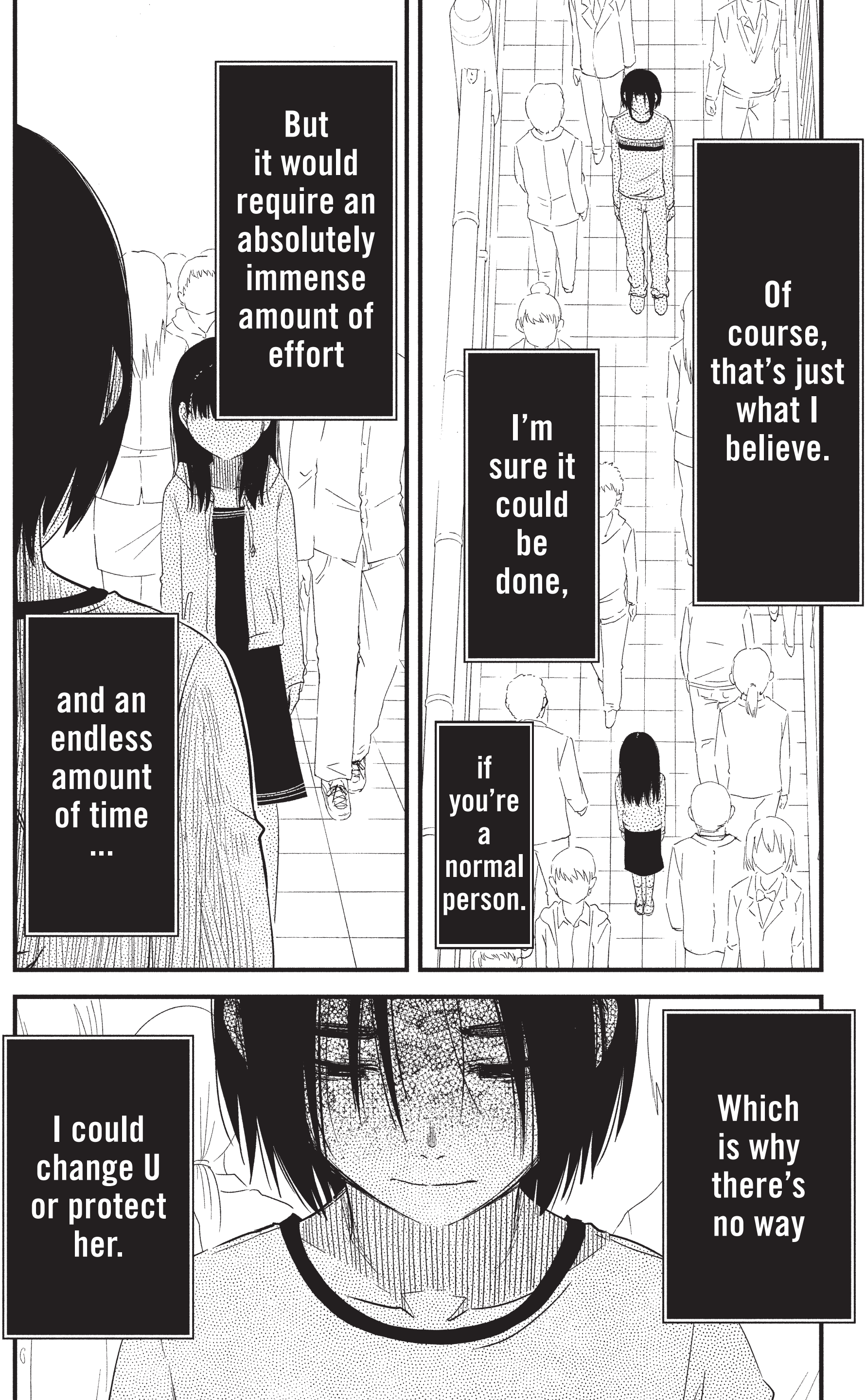

But... by causing her plan to imprison me to fail,
I must have freed her in some tiny way
from the grasp of that "ruled notebook."
Maybe, in some tiny way,
I'd made things easier for her...
y "Good morning."
ou for this meal."
for the food."
e going now."
nice day."
home."
et you."
THP

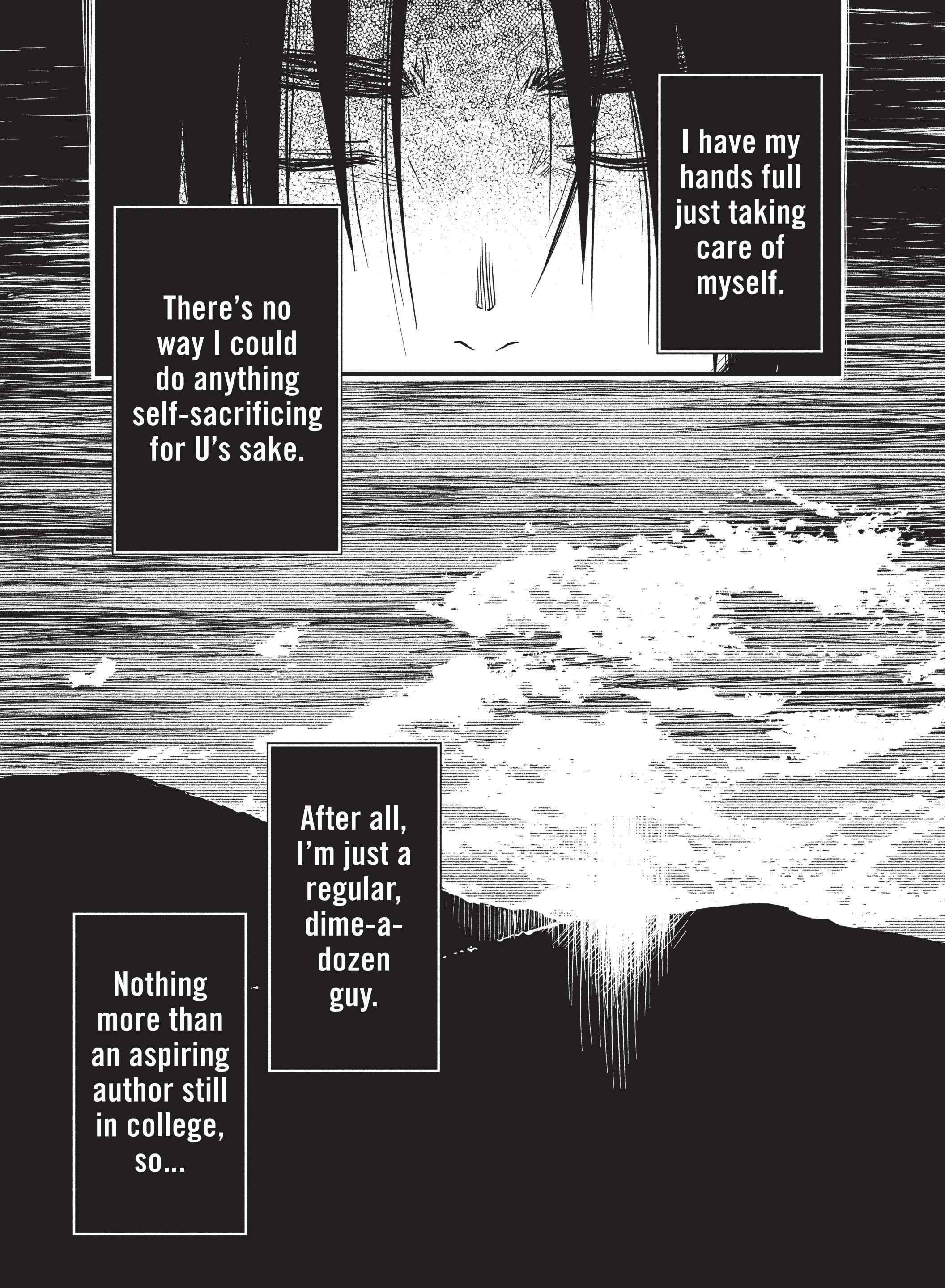

She's light...
This is the body of the girl who'd imprisoned me for six days straight...
She weighs about the same as a piece of baggage I could carry in one hand...
But she's not baggage. She's a person.

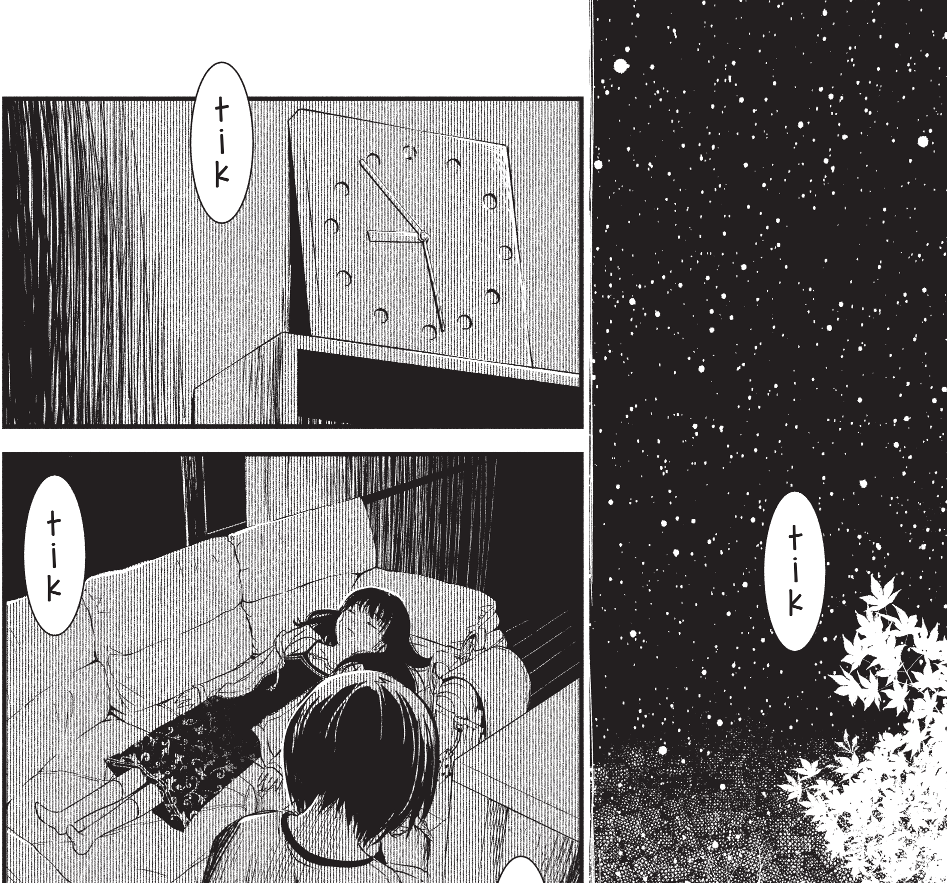

Two bastards who had forgotten that
are dead on the second floor of this house.
ゴー‥ン
GOONG
ゴォー‥ン
GOONG

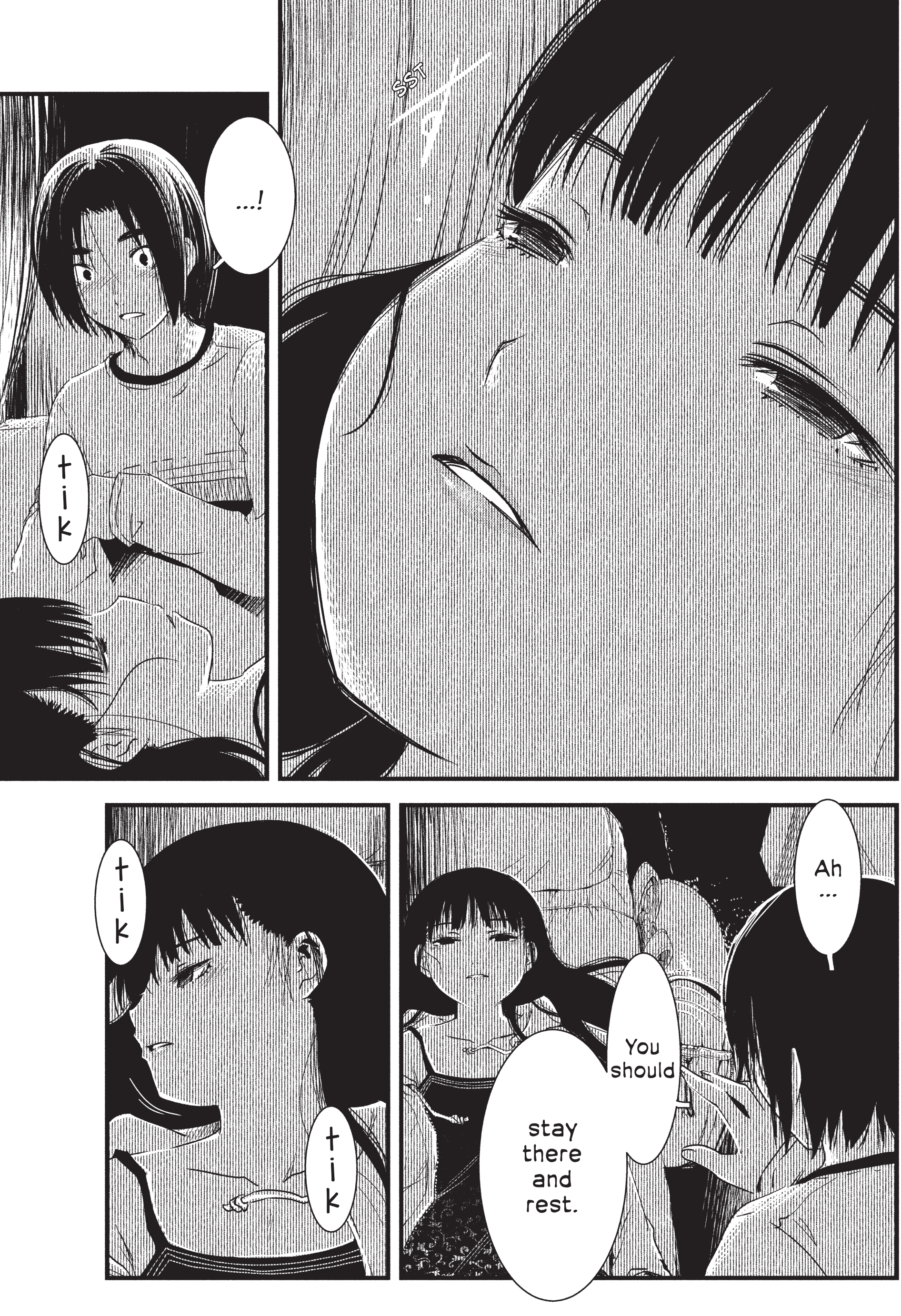

ゴー‥ン
GOONG
This girl's life
has gone so far off the rails that the damage
could never be undone.

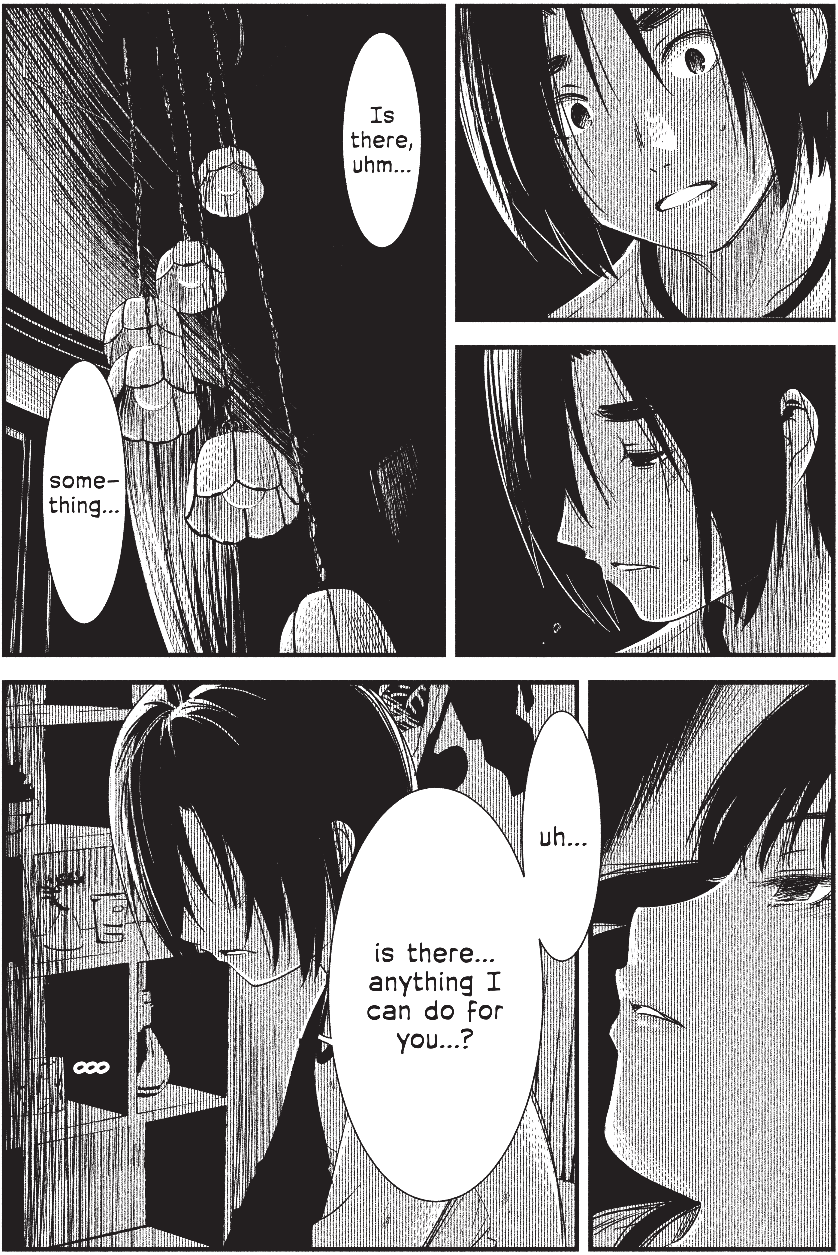

I’m sure some people would say,
“Of course it’s possible for her to recover,”
or …
“Plenty of people with her kind of background end up leading respectable lives.”
But …
is that really the case?
Is it really possible to put U’s life back on track after all of this?
I…
don’t think it is.

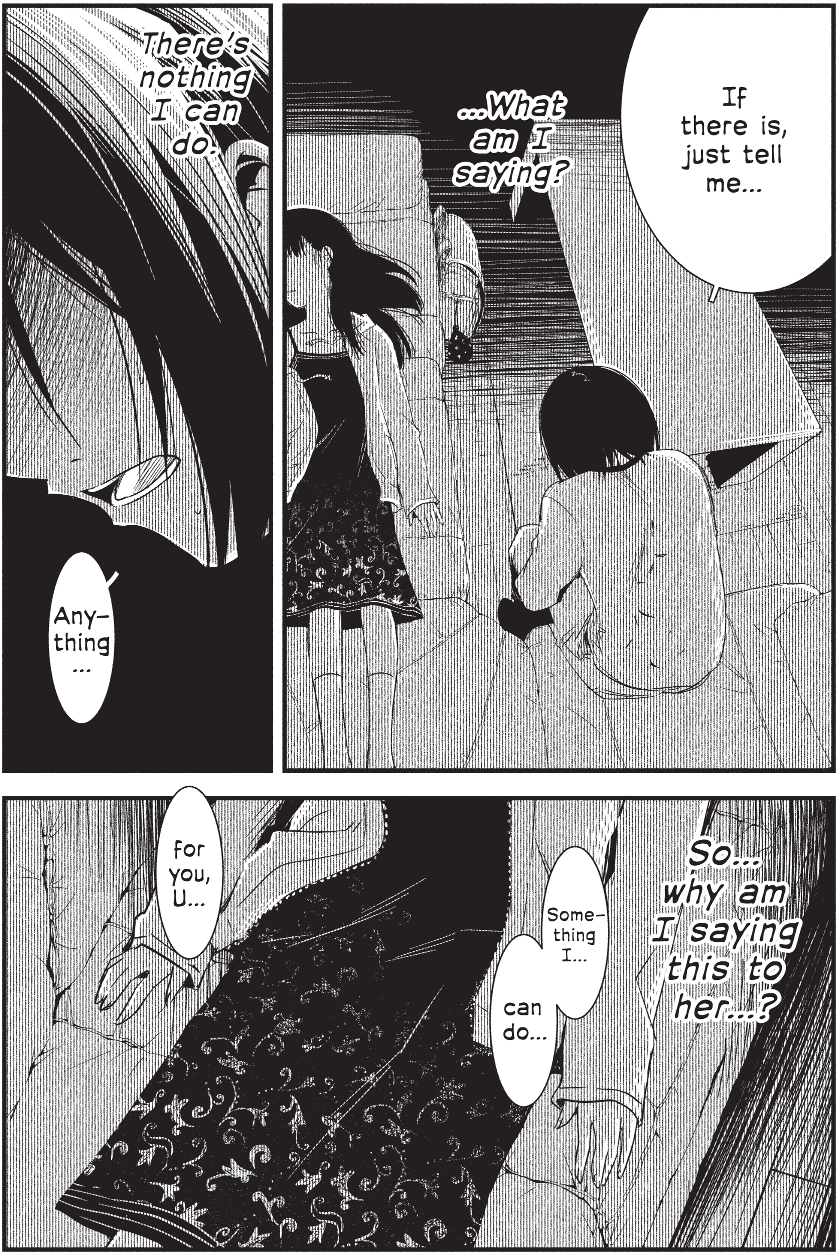

Of course, that's just what I believe.
I'm sure it could be done,
if you're a normal person.
But it would require an absolutely immense amount of effort
and an endless amount of time ...
Which is why there's no way
I could change U or protect her.

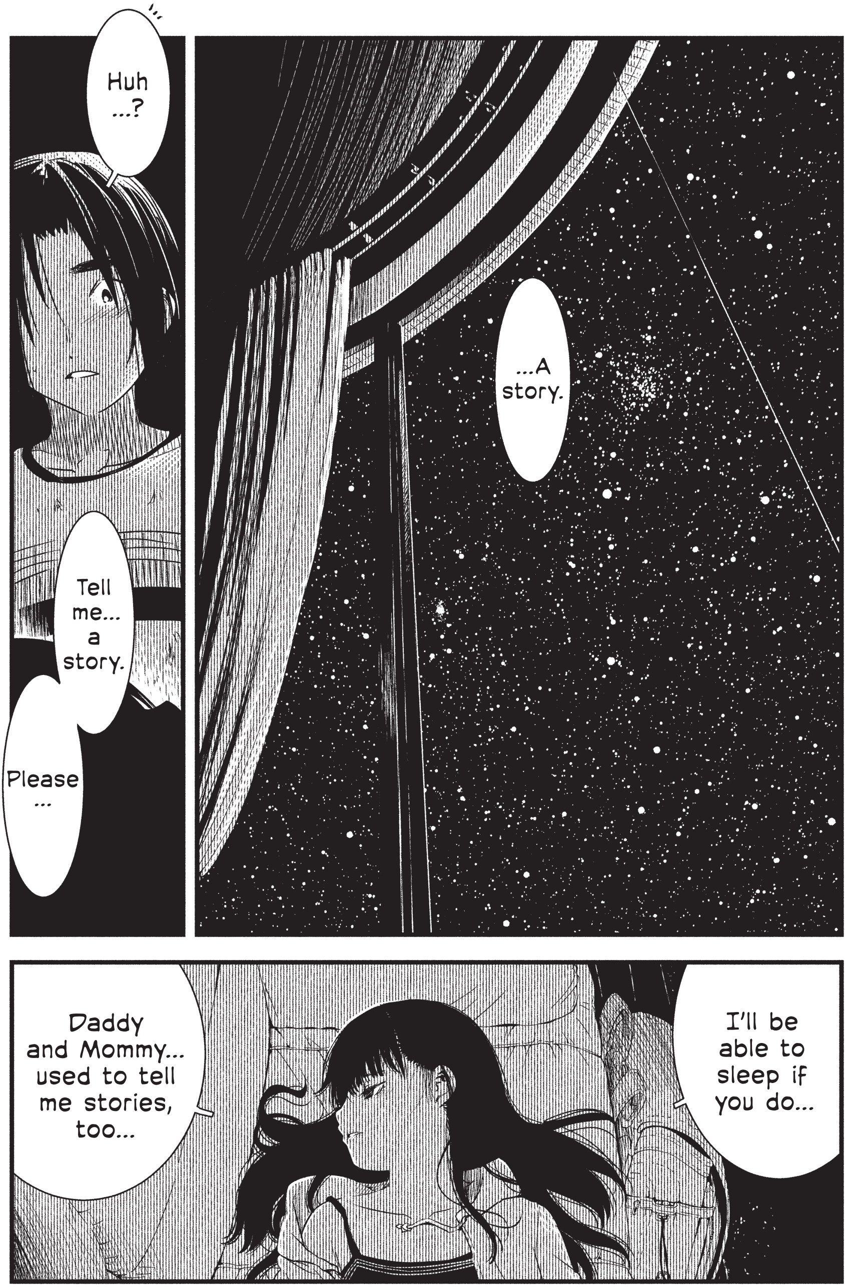

I have my hands full just taking care of myself.
There's no way I could do anything self-sacrificing for U's sake.
After all, I'm just a regular, dime-a-dozen guy.
Nothing more than an aspiring author still in college, so...

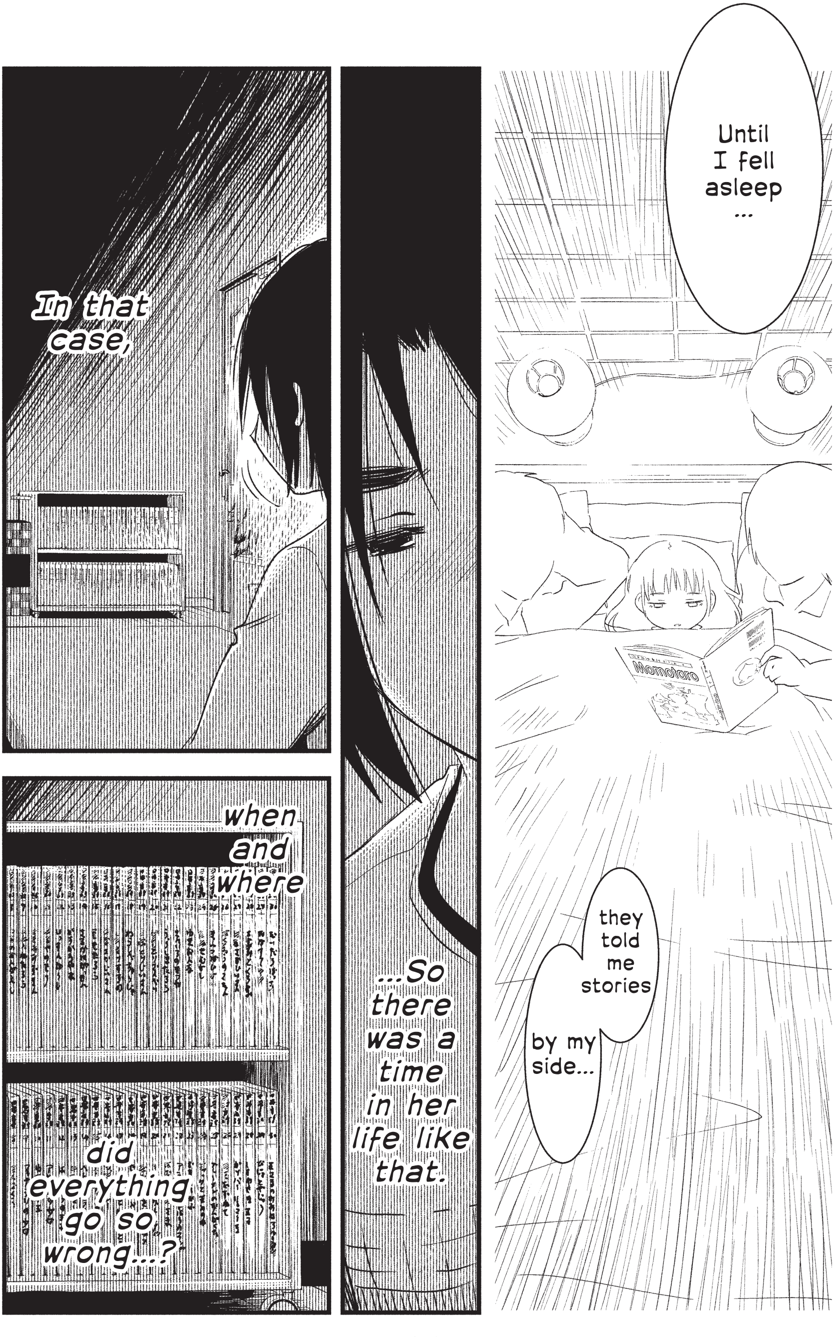

tik
tik
tik
tik
tik
tik

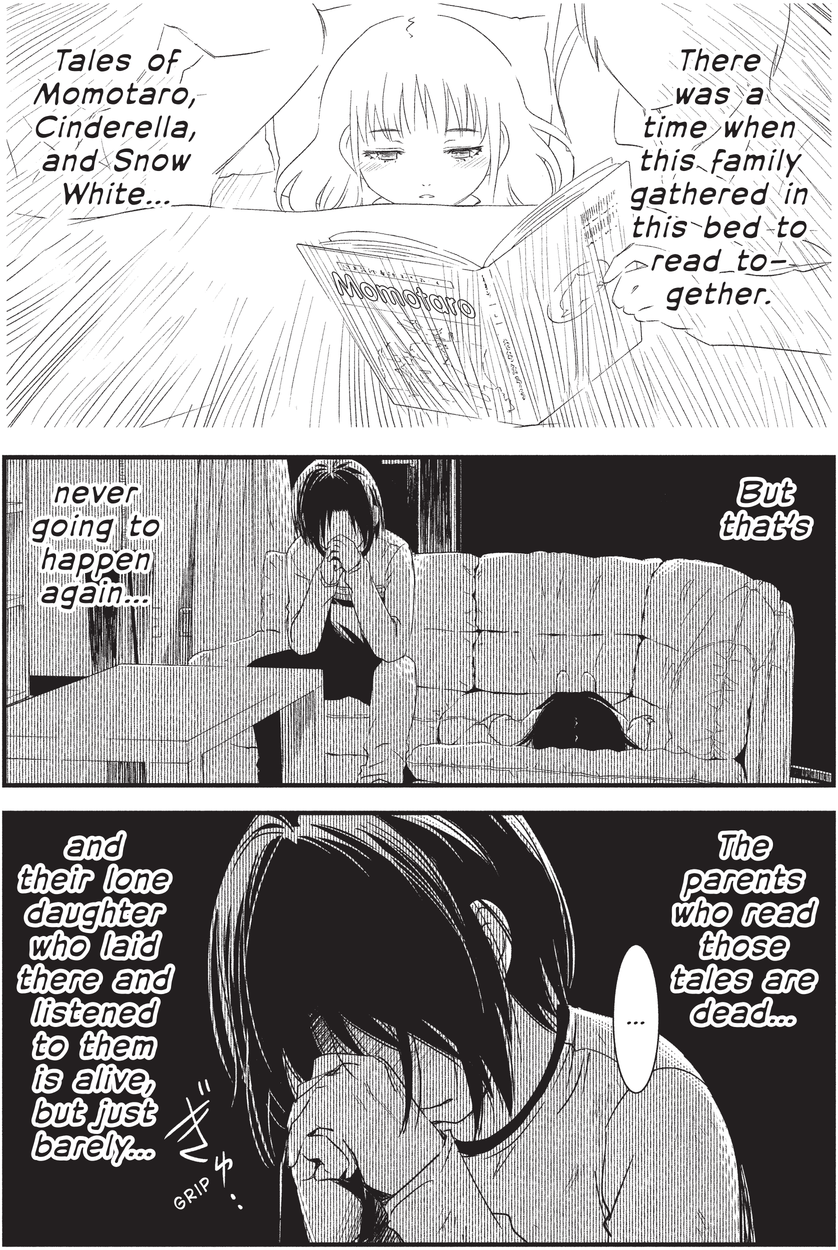

SST
...!
tik
Ah...
You should stay there and rest.
tik
tik

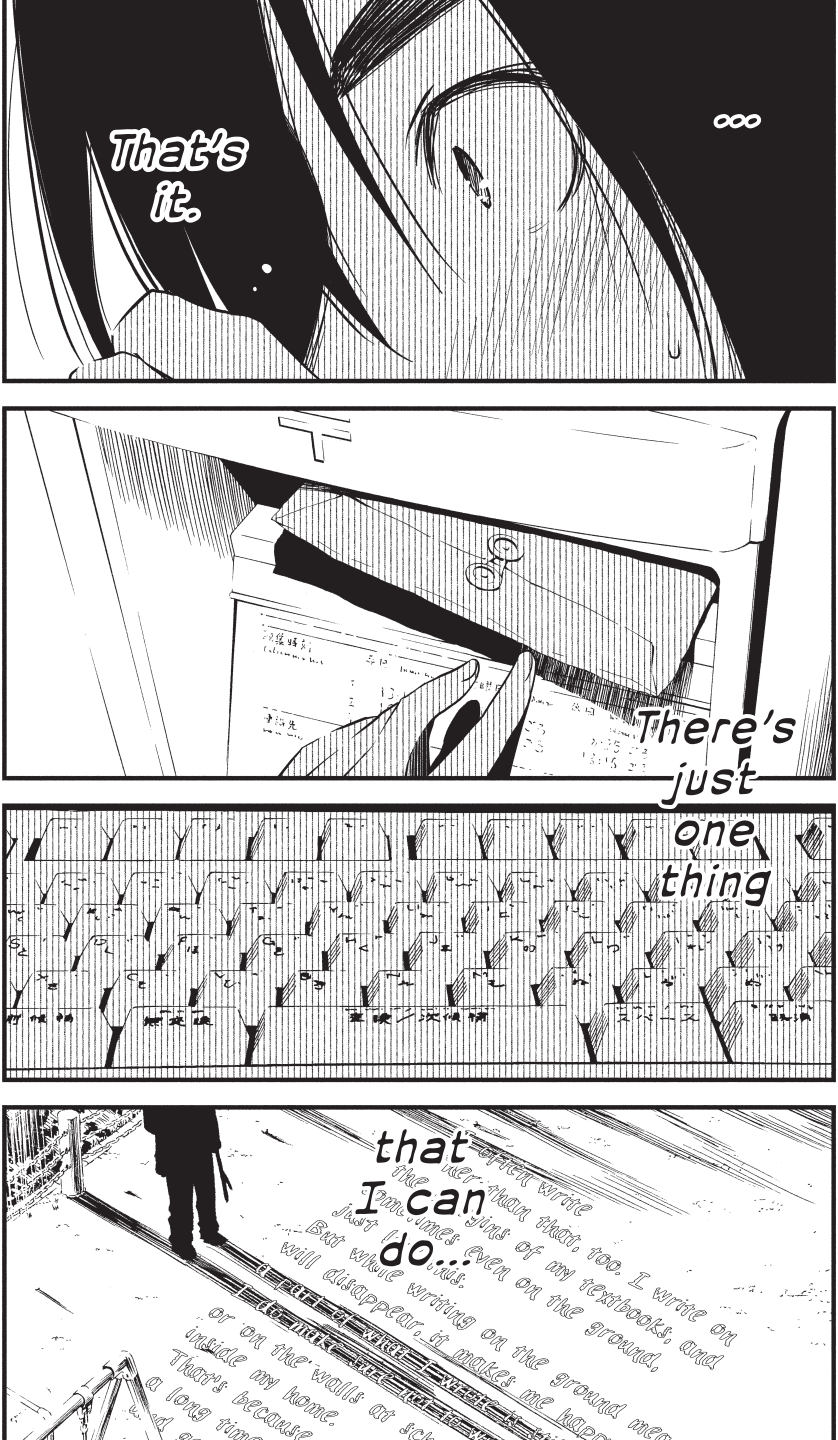

Is there, uhm...
some-thing...
uh...
is there... anything I can do for you...?

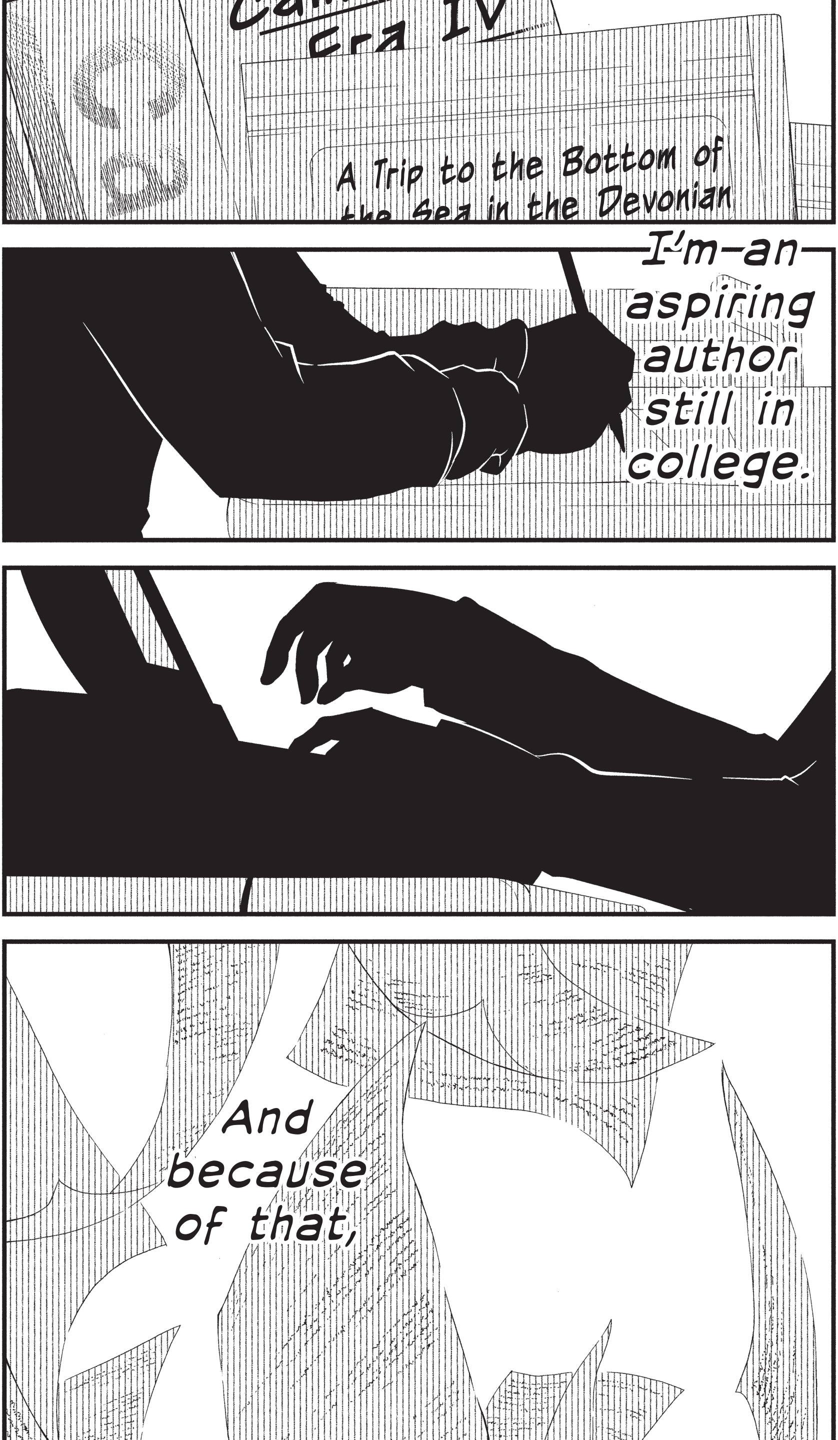

If there is, just tell me...
...What am I saying?
There's nothing I can do.
Any-thing...
So... why am I saying this to her...?
Some-thing I...
can do...
for you, U...

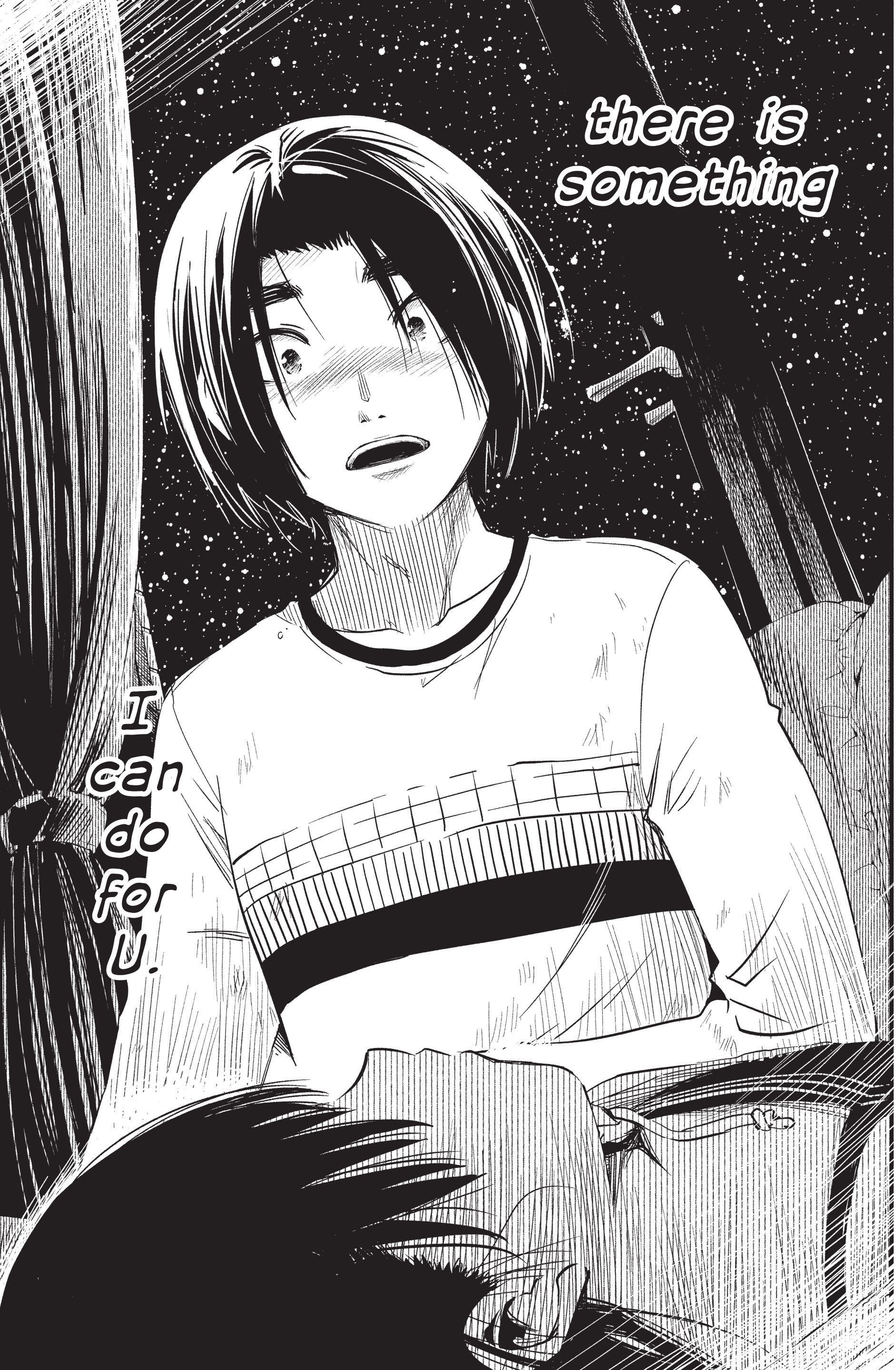

...A story.
Huh ...?
Tell me... a story.
Please ...
I'll be able to sleep if you do...
Daddy and Mommy... used to tell me stories, too...

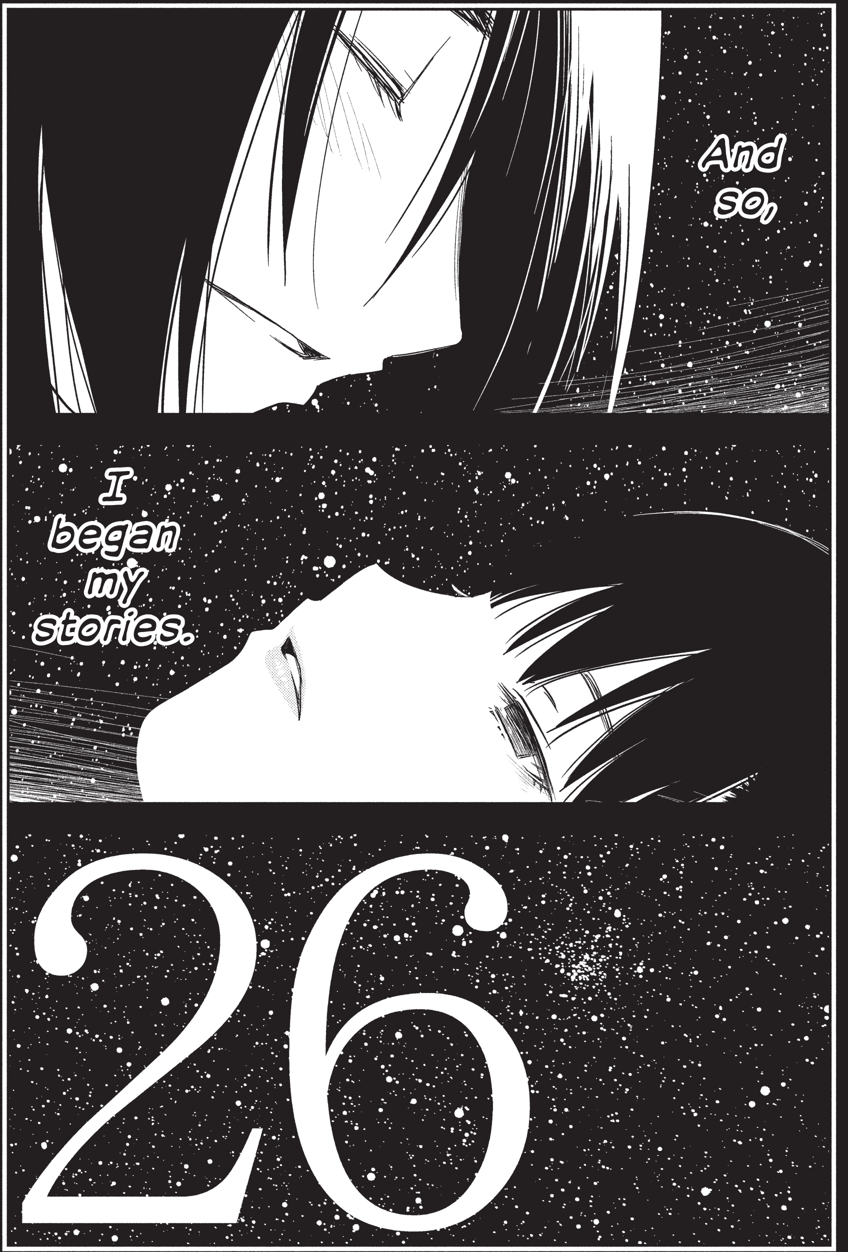

Until I fell asleep ...
Momotaro
they told me stories
by my side...
...So there was a time in her life like that.
In that case,
when and where
did everything go so wrong...?


There was a time when this family gathered in this bed to read together.
Tales of Momotaro, Cinderella, and Snow White...
Momotaro
But that's
never going to happen again...
The parents who read those tales are dead...
...
and their lone daughter who laid there and listened to them is alive, but just barely...
GRIP

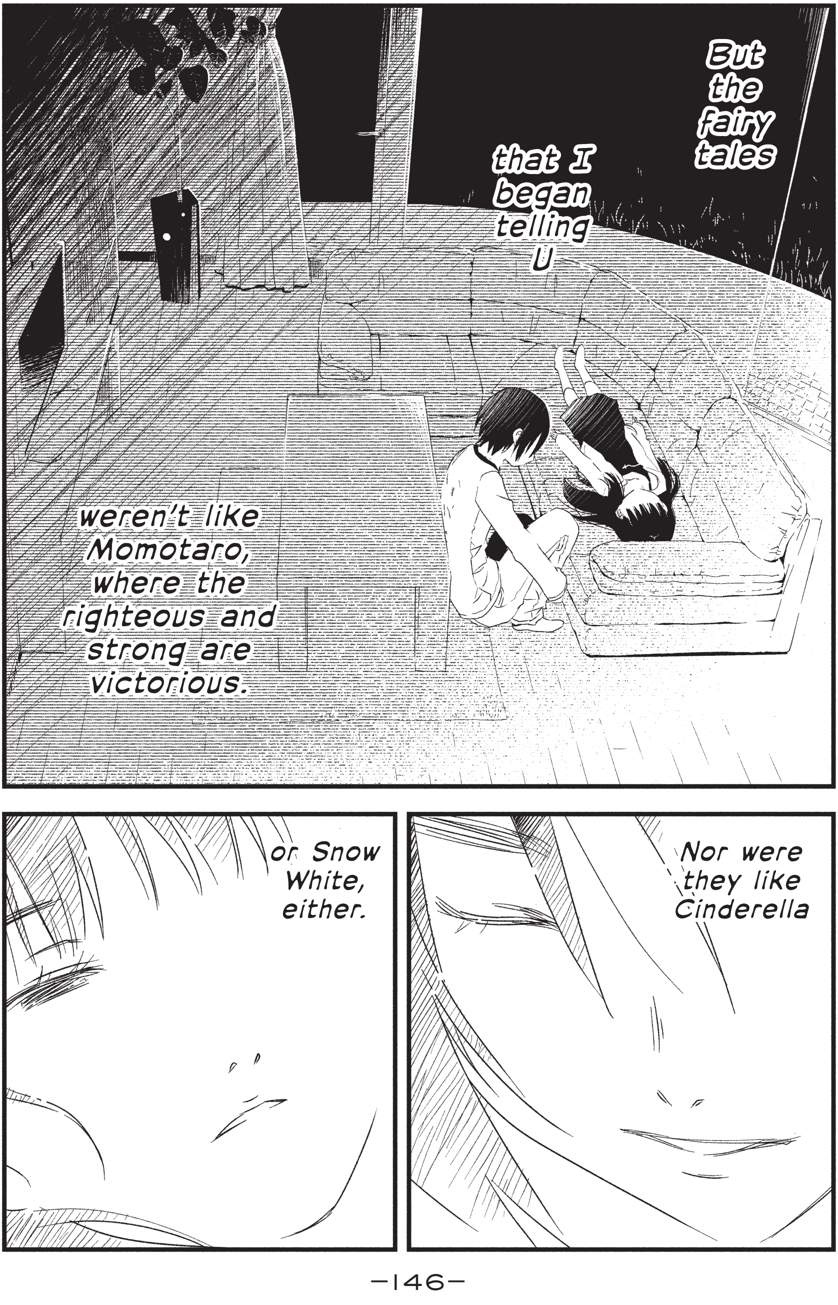

...
That's it.
There's just one thing
that I can do...
I often write
ner than that, too. I write on
the gins of my textbooks, and
ometimes even on the ground,
just l his.
But while writing on the ground
will disappear, it makes me happ mea
a part of what I wrote is sti
I do make sure not to w
or on the walls at sch
inside my home.
That's because
a long time

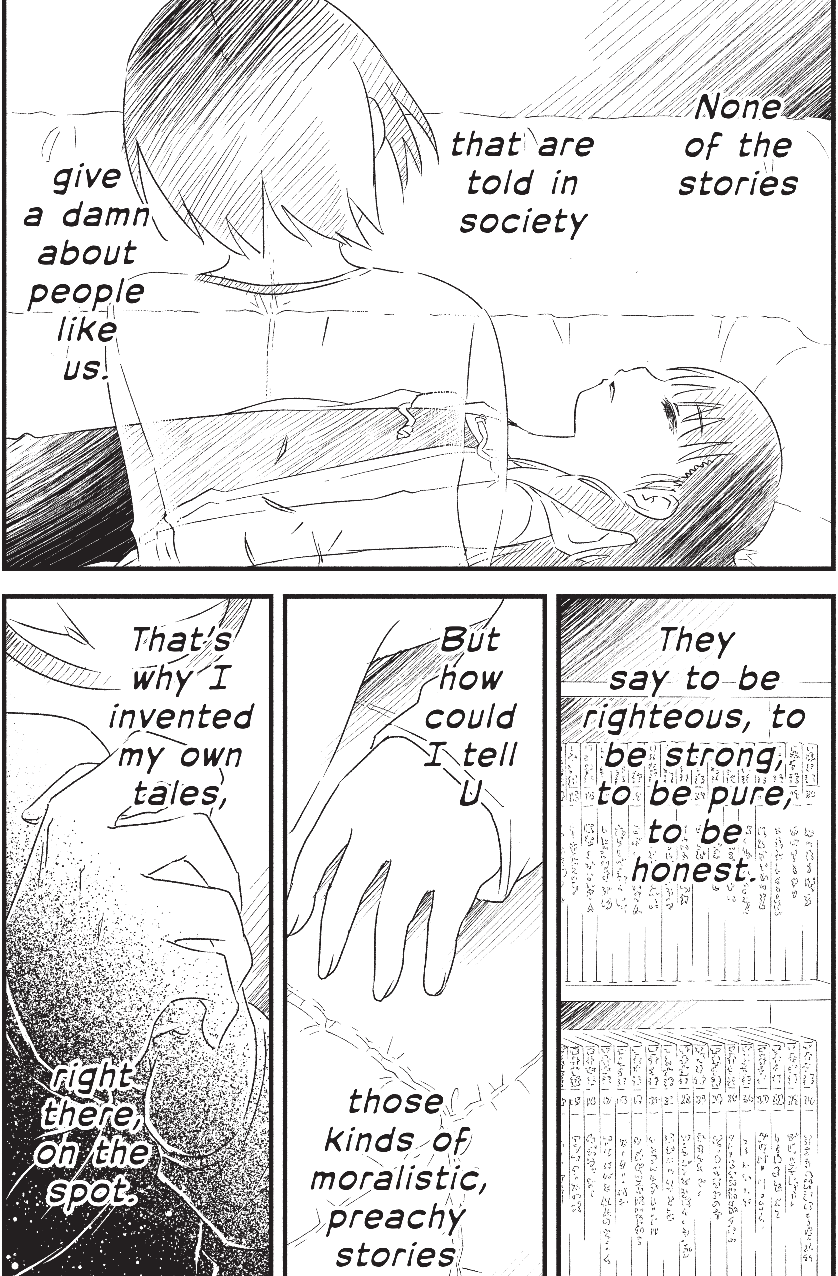

A Trip to the Bottom of the Sea in the Devonian
I'm an aspiring author still in college.
And because of that,

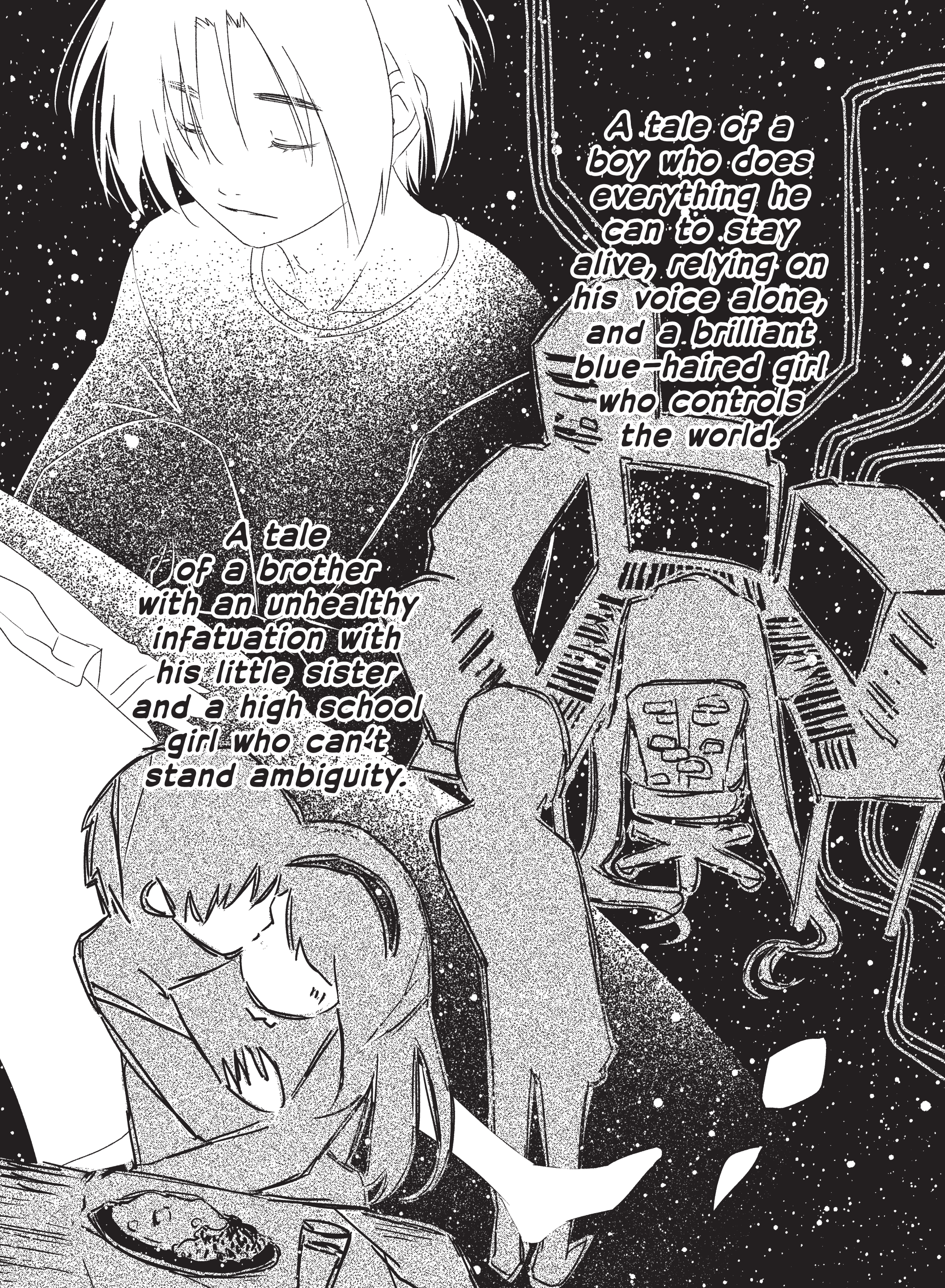

there is something
I can do for U.


And so,
I began my stories.

26


But the fairy tales
that I began telling U
weren't like Momotaro, where the righteous and strong are victorious.
Nor were they like Cinderella
or Snow White, either.


None of the stories
that are told in society
give a damn about people like us!
They say to be righteous, to be strong, to be pure, to be honest.
But how could I tell U
those kinds of moralistic, preachy stories now?
That's why I invented my own tales,
right there, on the spot.

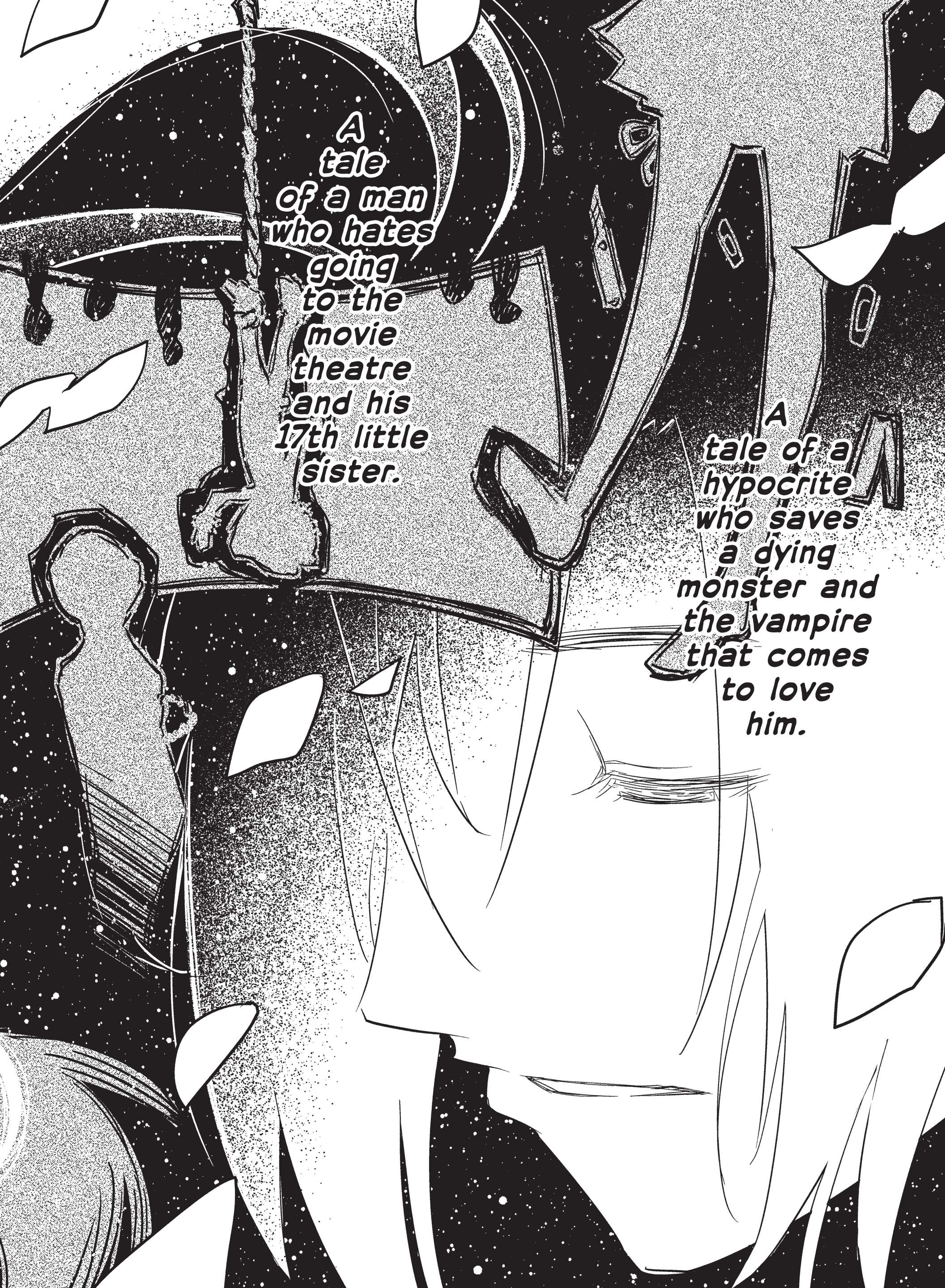


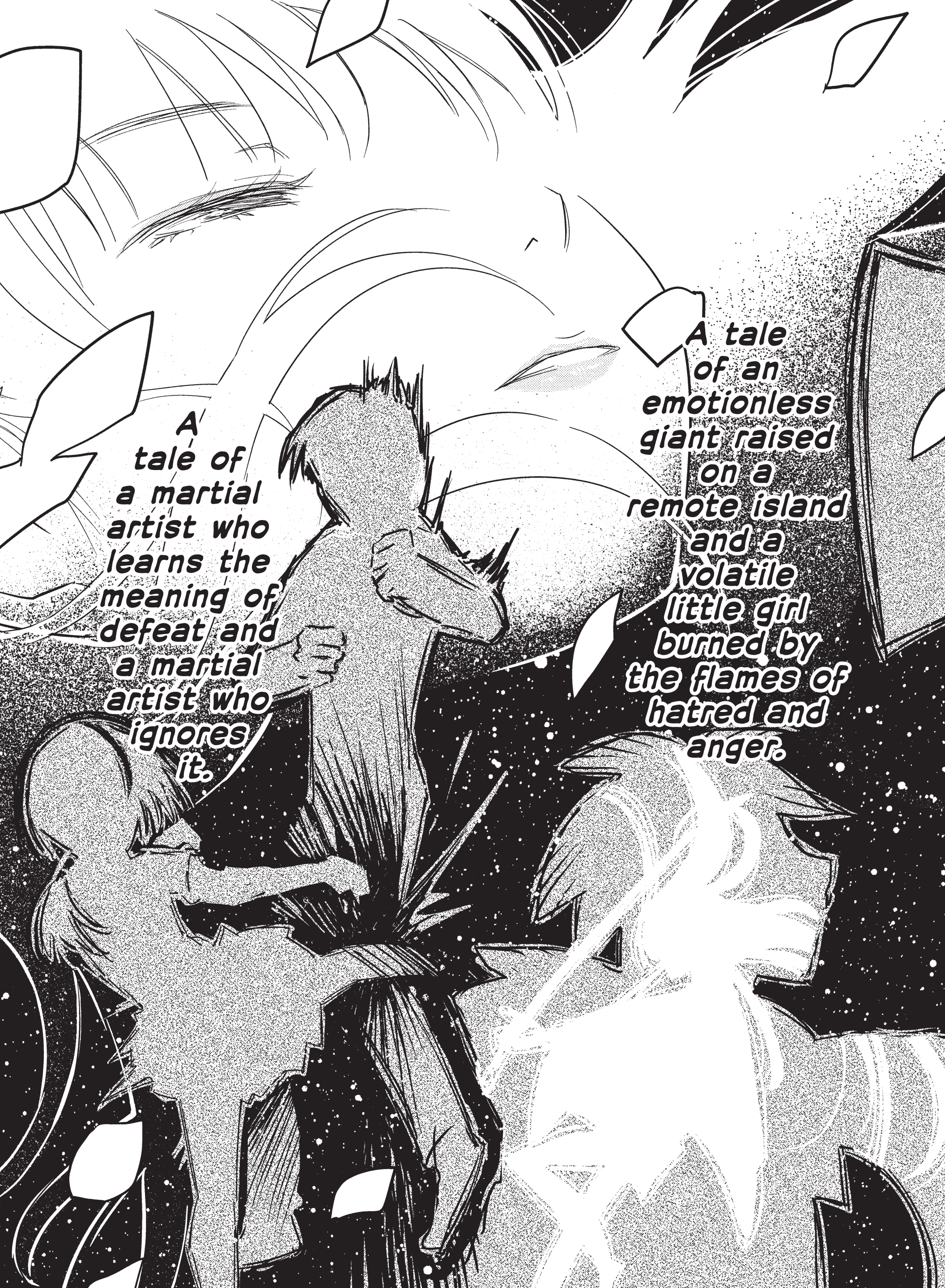
A tale of a boy who does everything he can to stay alive, relying on his voice alone, and a brilliant blue-haired girl who controls the world.

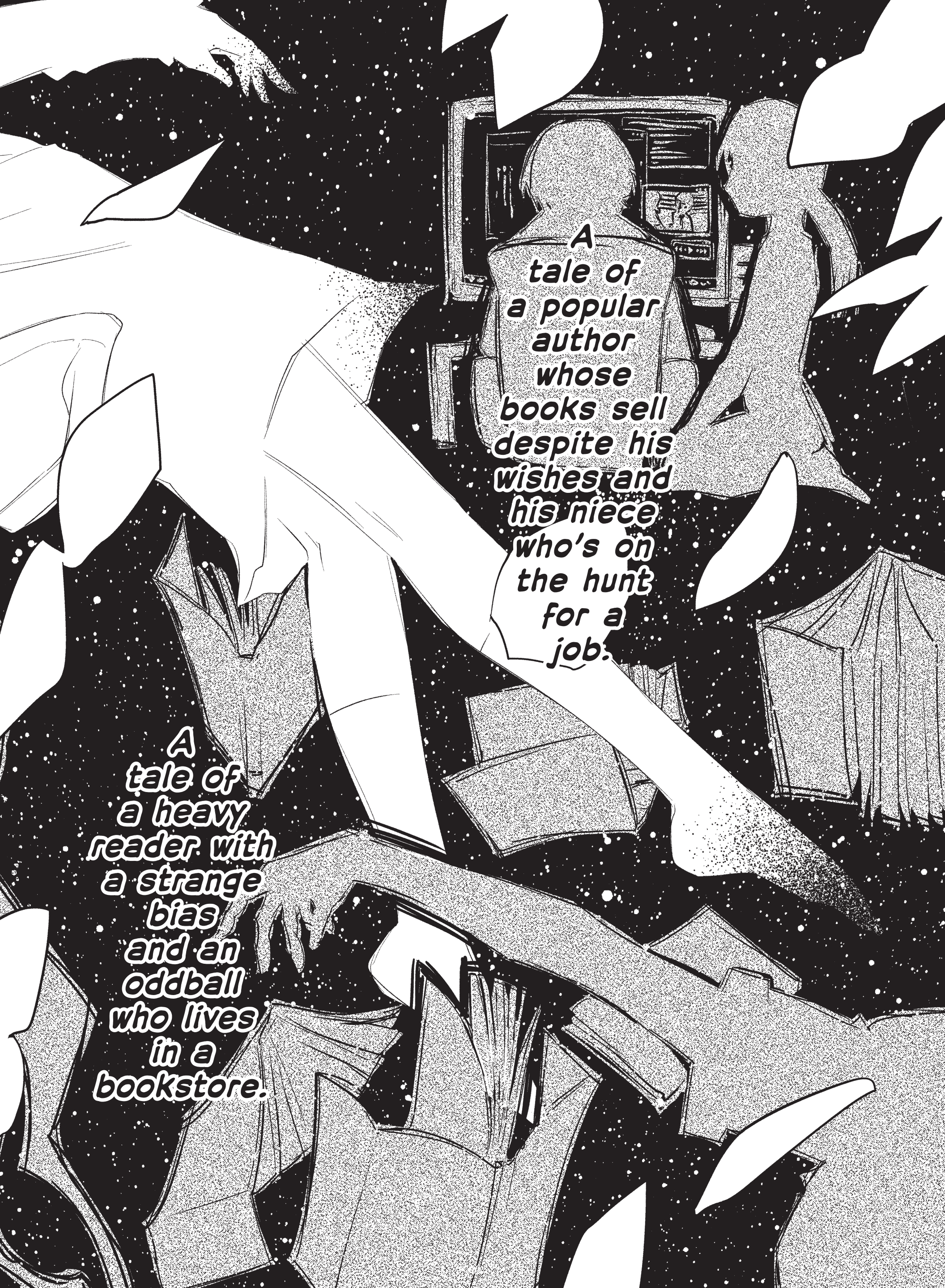
A tale of a brother with an unhealthy infatuation with his little sister and a high school girl who can't stand ambiguity.

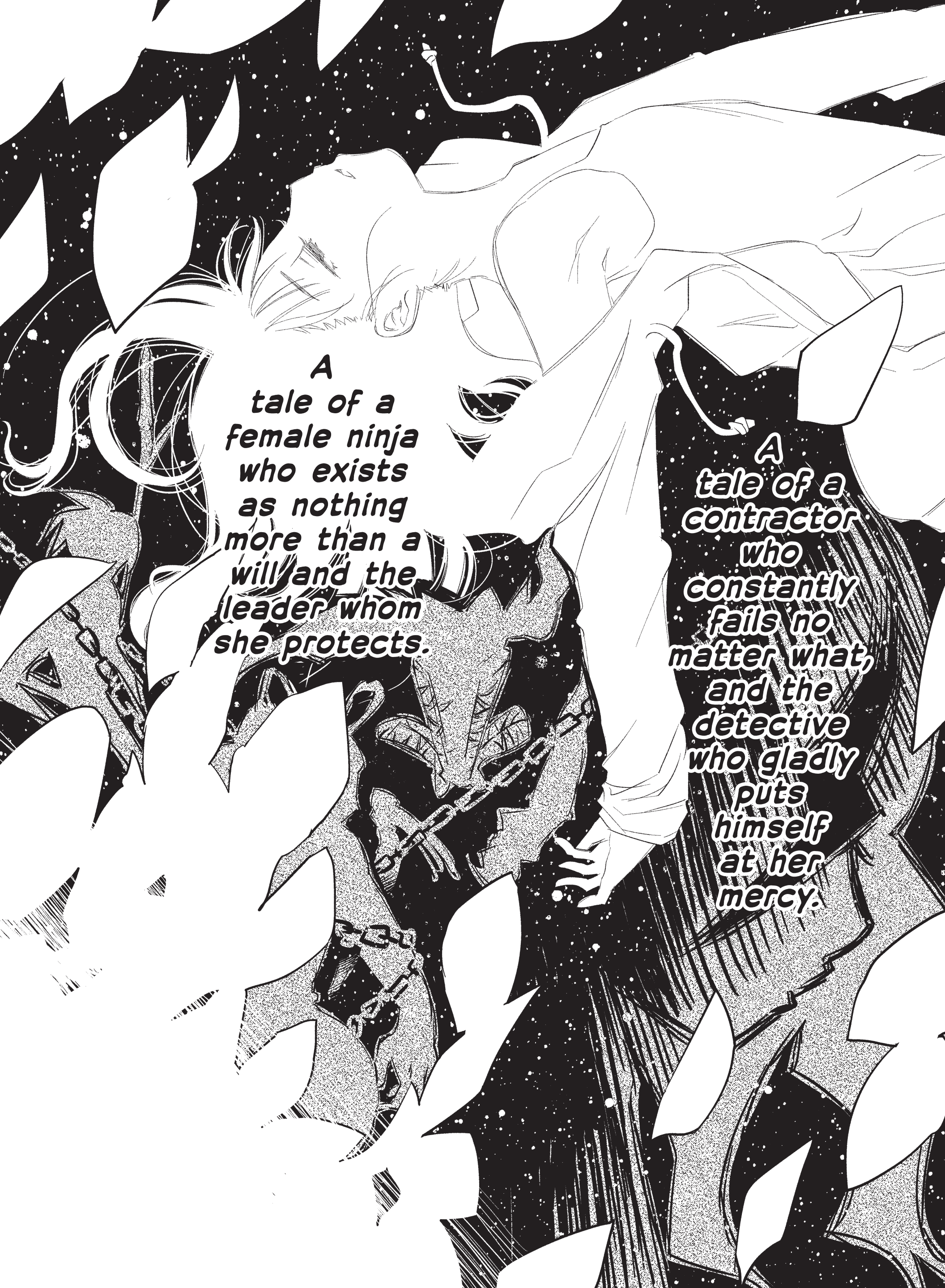
A tale of a grade schooler who tries to save the Earth through mere wits and bravery and a magical girl who dreams of growing and maturing.

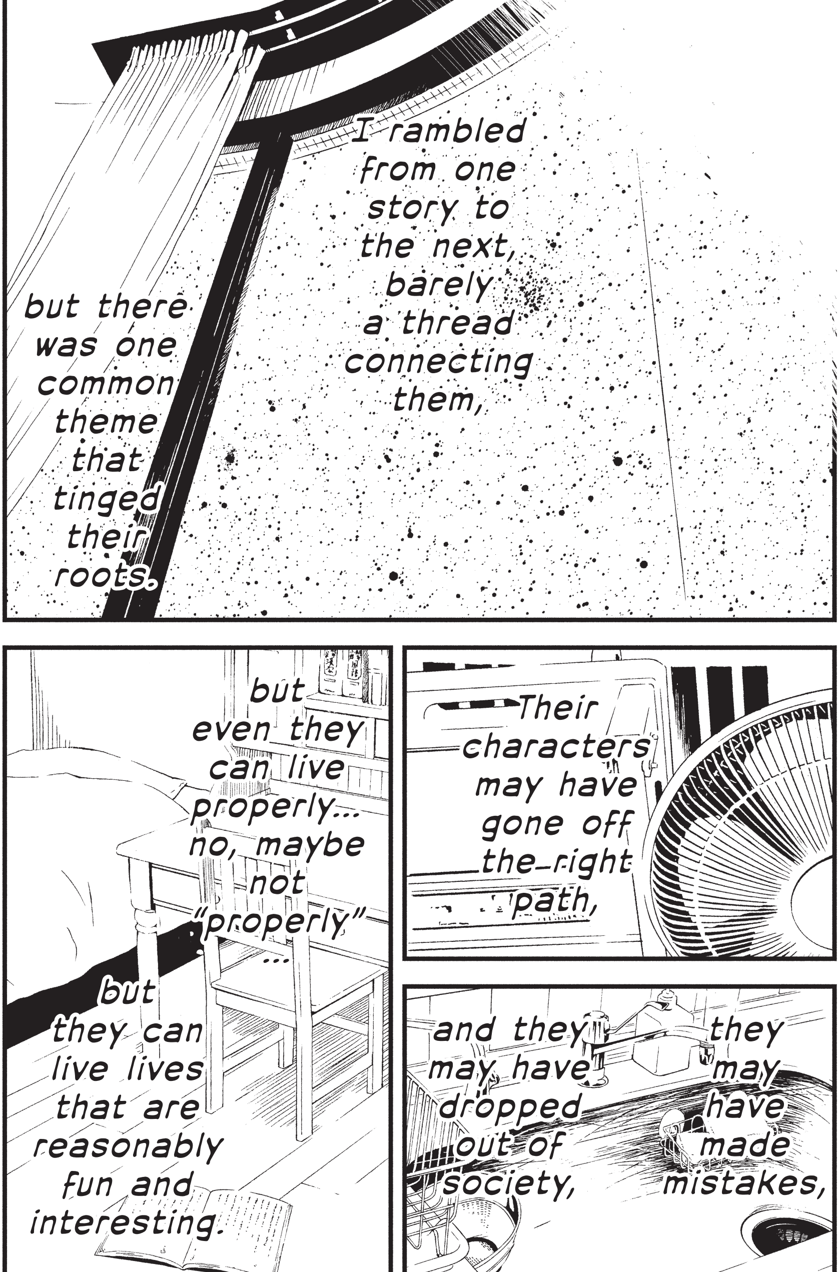
A tale of a murderer who prizes familial love and a knit cap that draws people to the allure of killing.

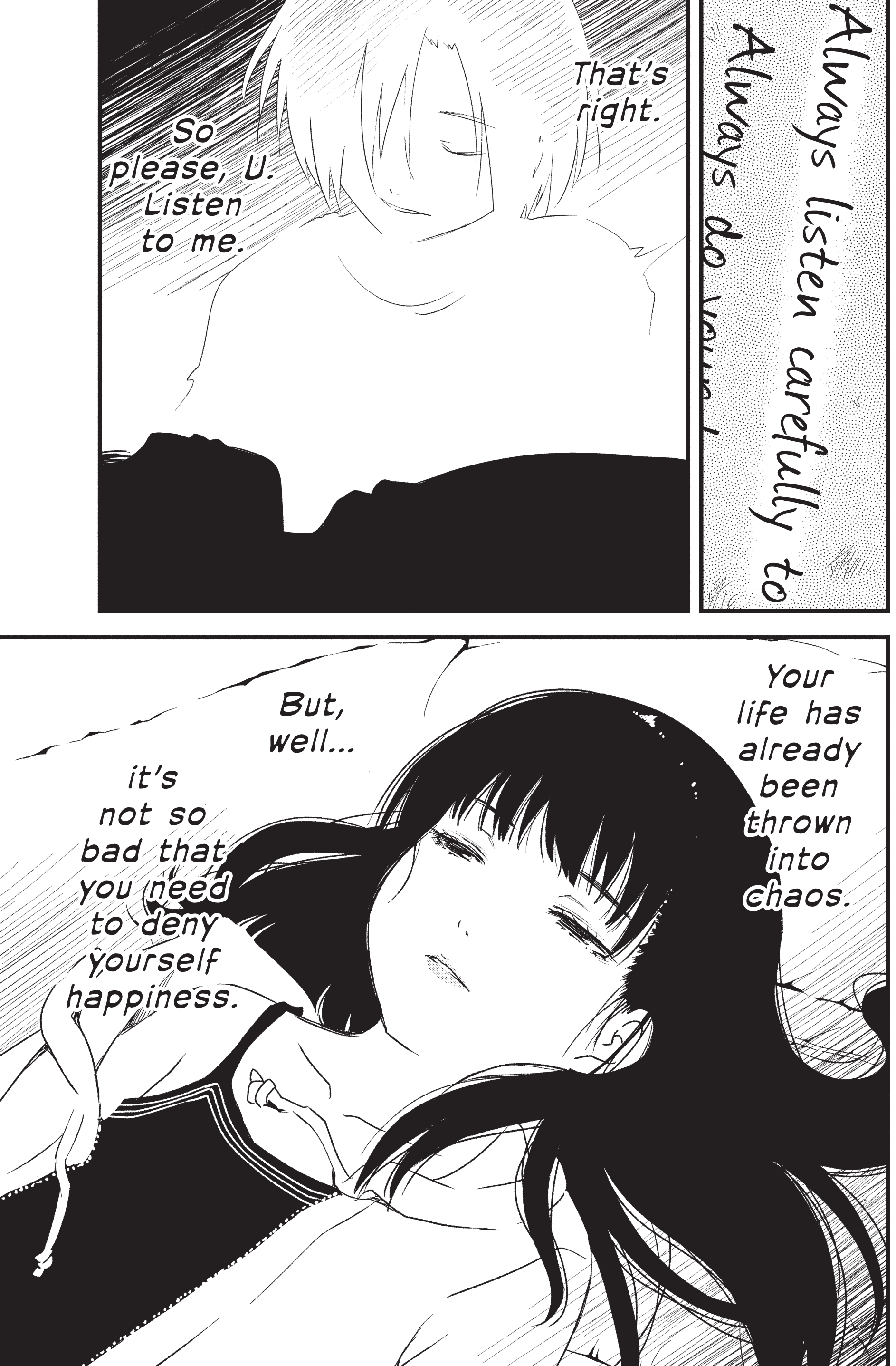

A tale of a man who hates going to the movie theatre and his 17th little sister.
A tale of a hypocrite who saves a dying monster and the vampire that comes to love him.

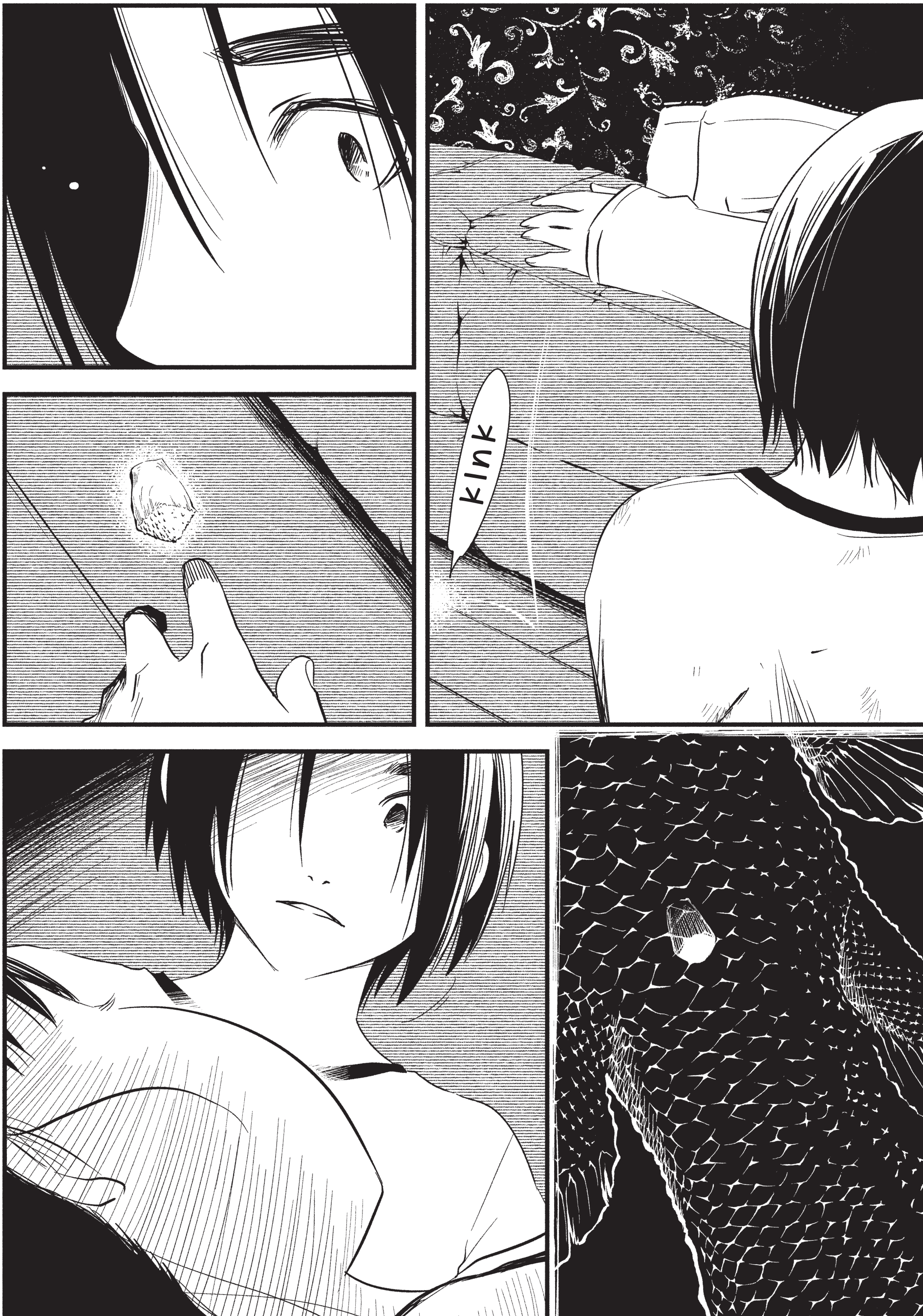

A tale of an emotionless giant raised on a remote island and a volatile little girl burned by the flames of hatred and anger.
A tale of a martial artist who learns the meaning of defeat and a martial artist who ignores it.

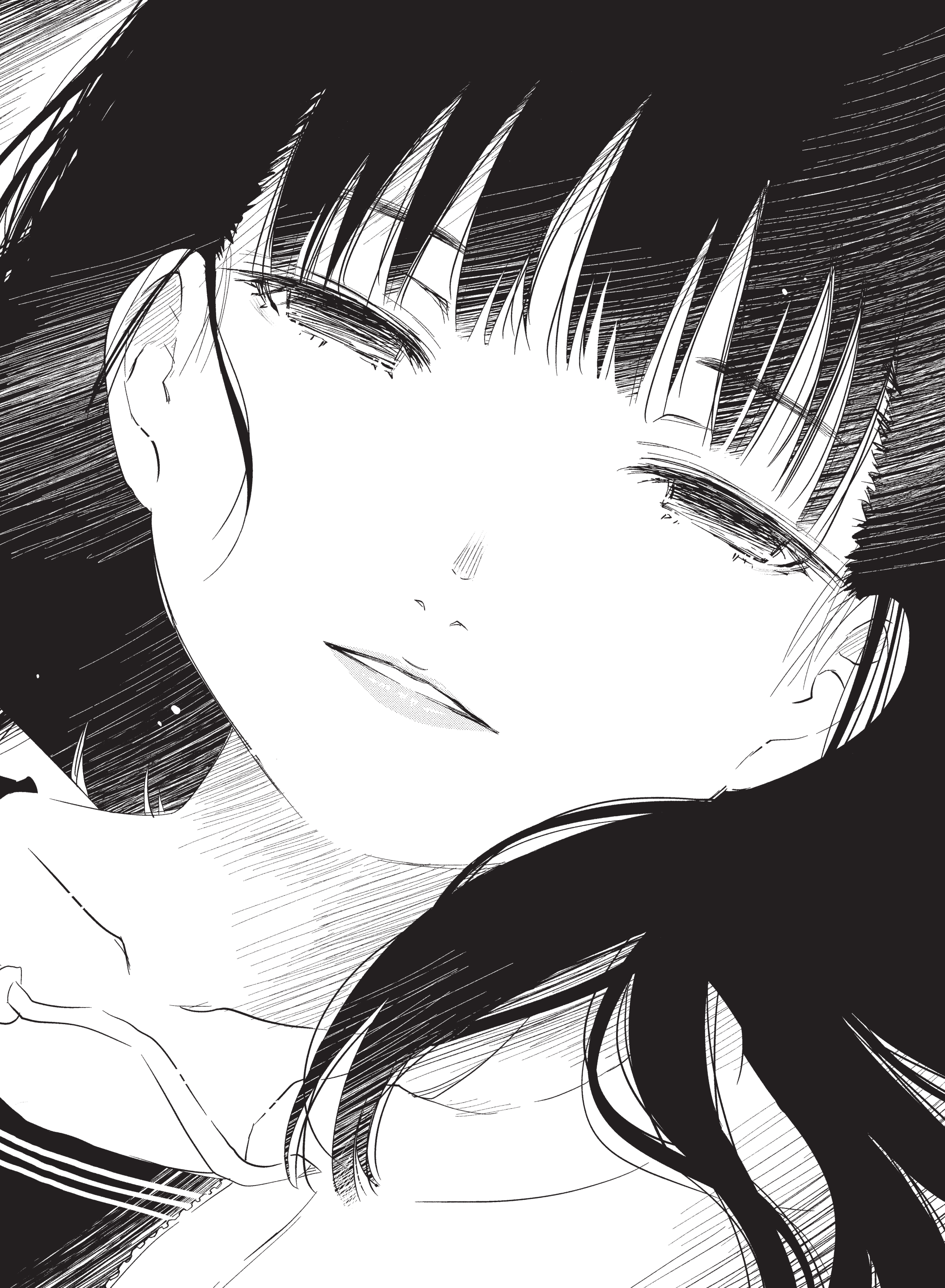

A tale of a popular author whose books sell despite his wishes and his niece who's on the hunt for a job.
A tale of a heavy reader with a strange bias and an oddball who lives in a bookstore.

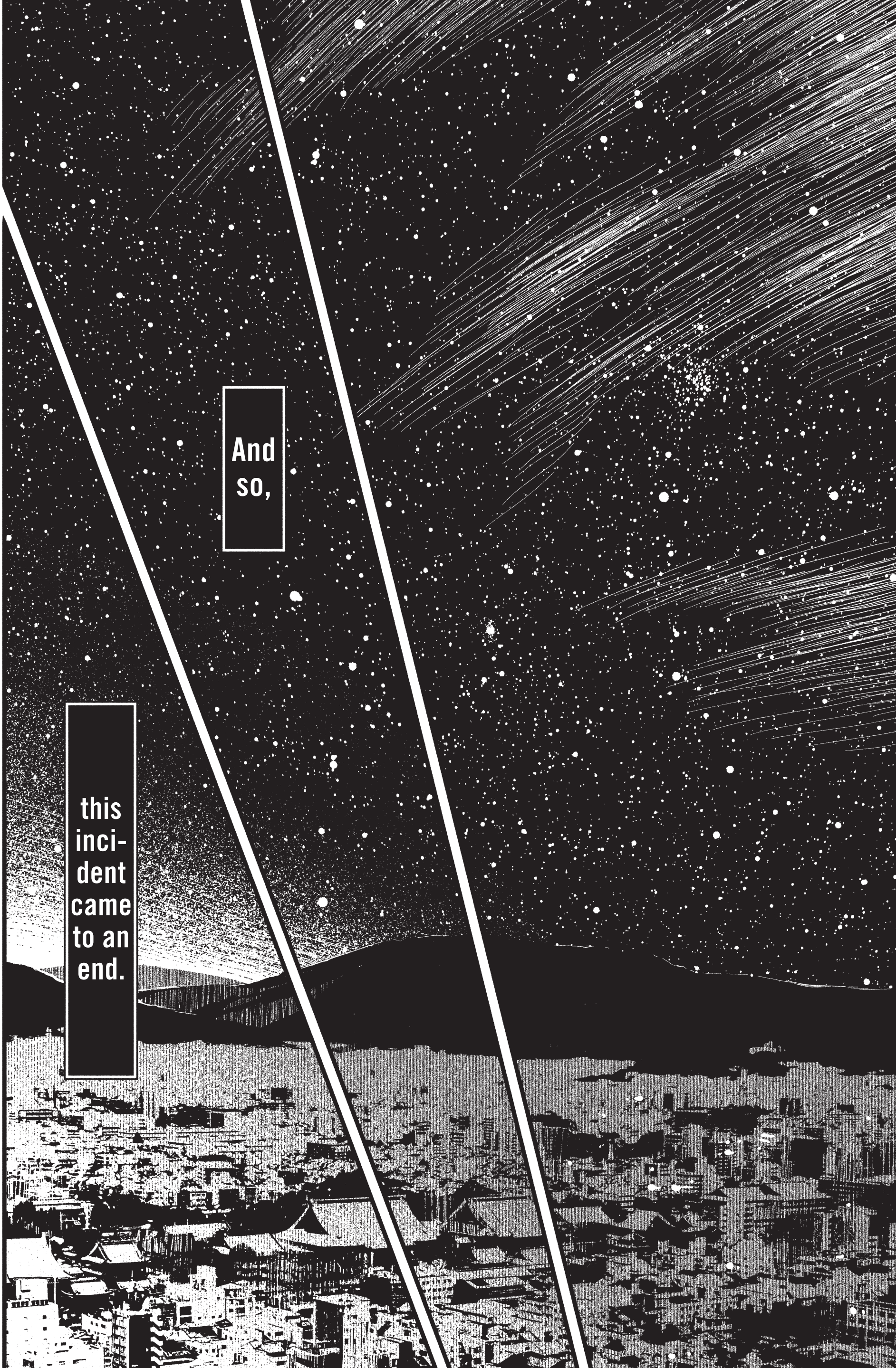

A tale of a contractor who constantly fails no matter what, and the detective who gladly puts himself at her mercy.
A tale of a female ninja who exists as nothing more than a will and the leader whom she protects.

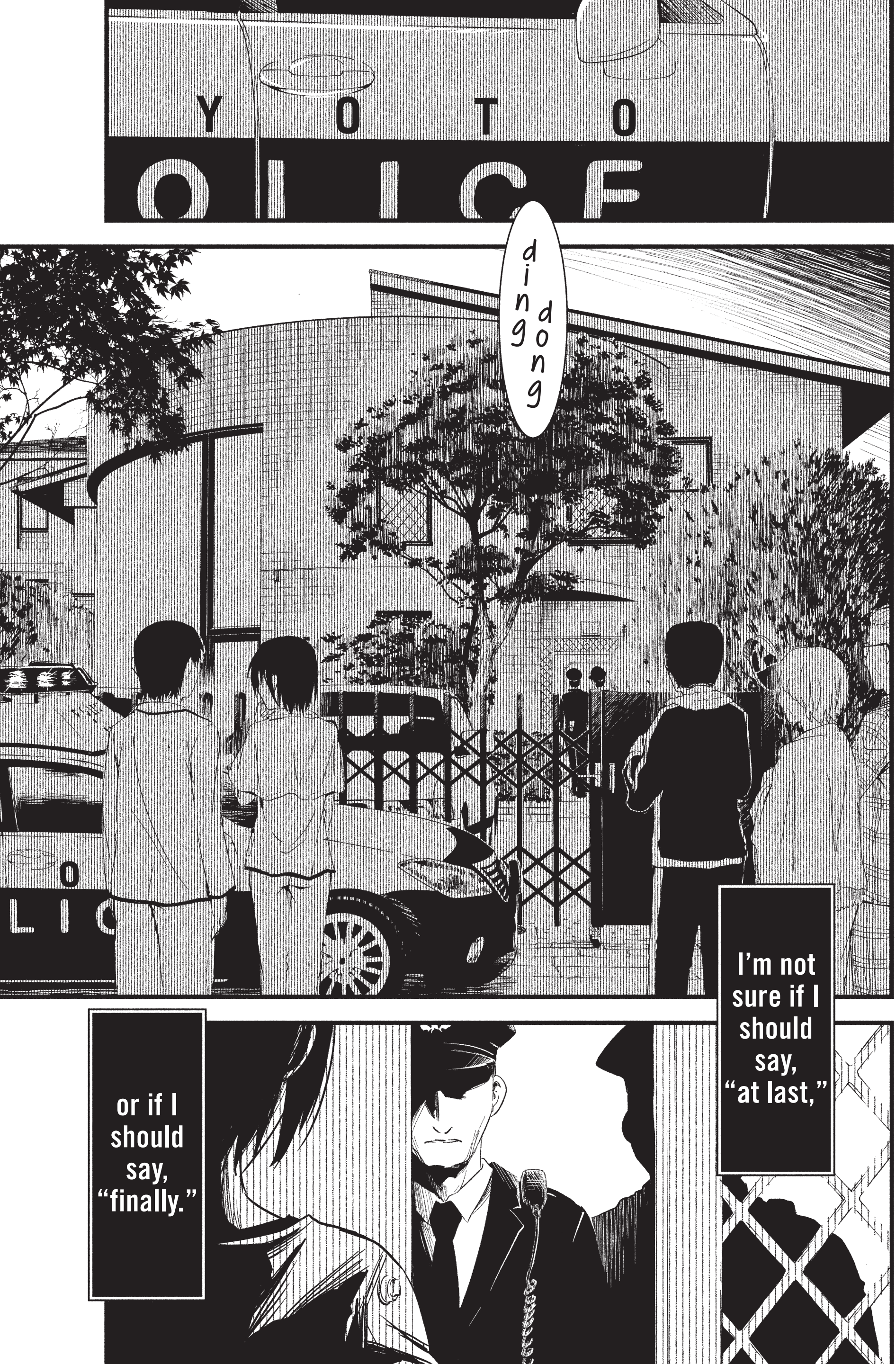

I rambled from one story to the next, barely a thread connecting them,
but there was one common theme that tinged their roots.
Their characters may have gone off the right path,
they may have made mistakes,
and they may have dropped out of society,
but even they can live properly... no, maybe not "properly"...
but they can live lives that are reasonably fun and interesting.

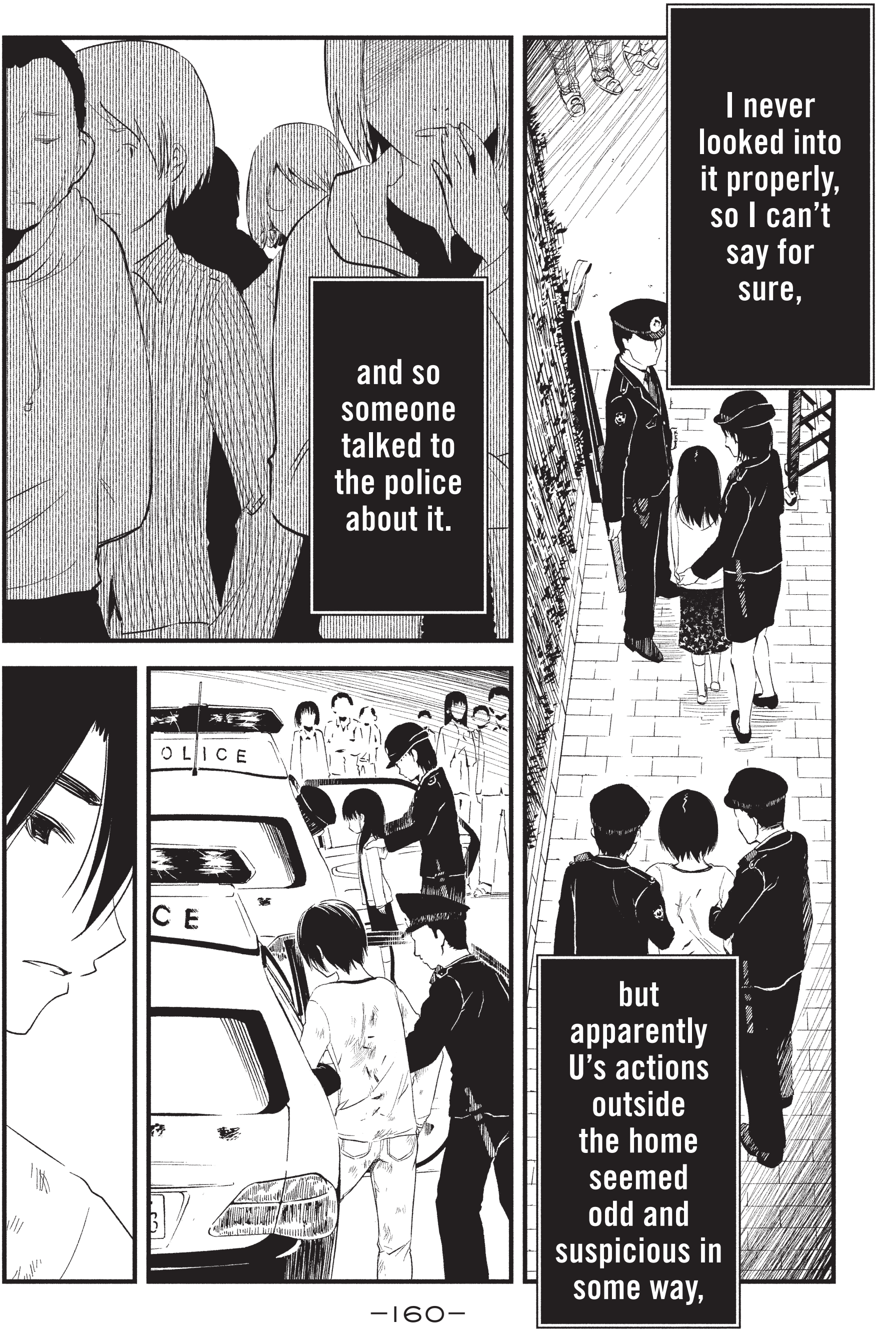

Always listen carefully to
Always do your...
That's right.
So please, U. Listen to me.
Your life has already been thrown into chaos.
But, well...
it's not so bad that you need to deny yourself happiness.

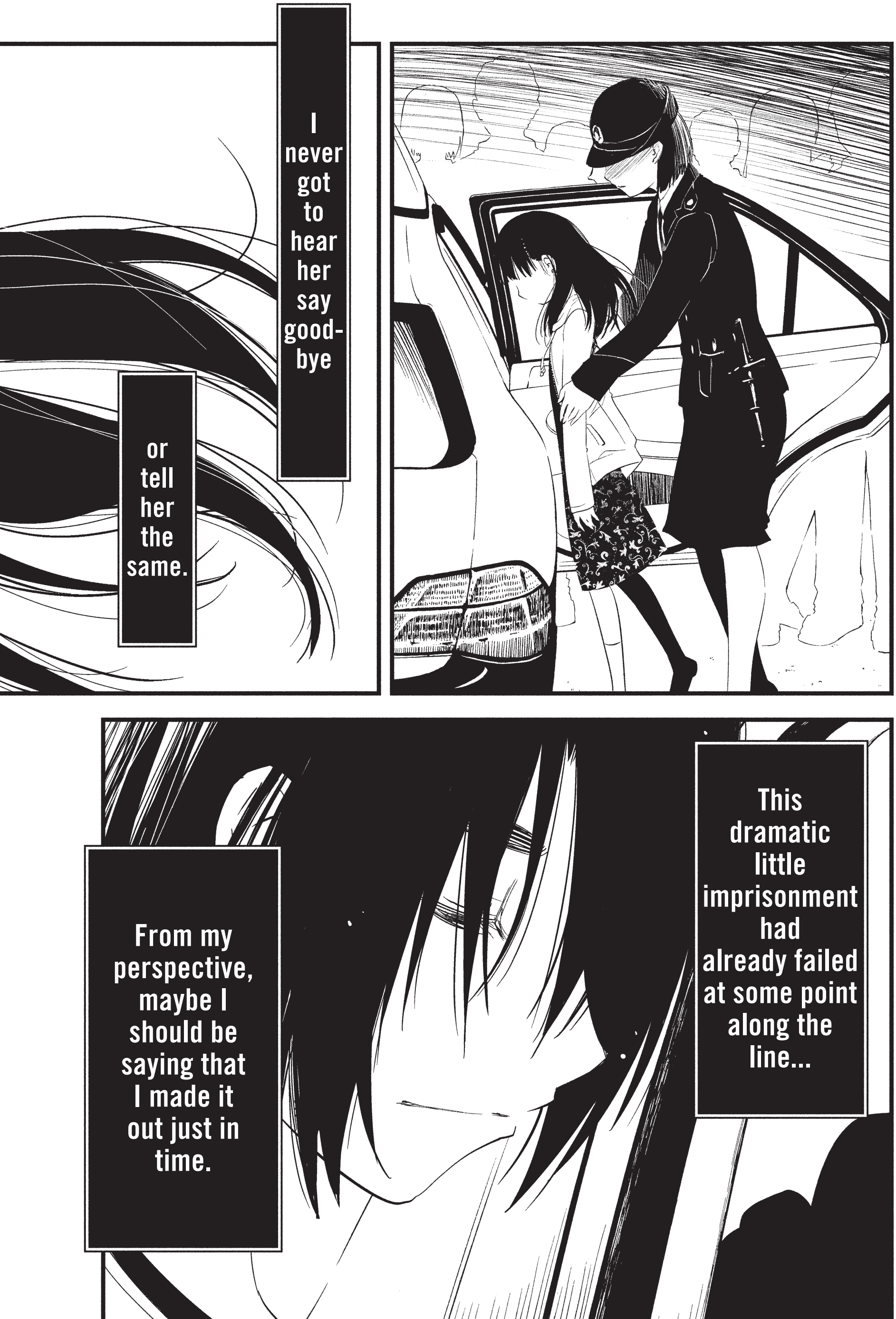

klnk

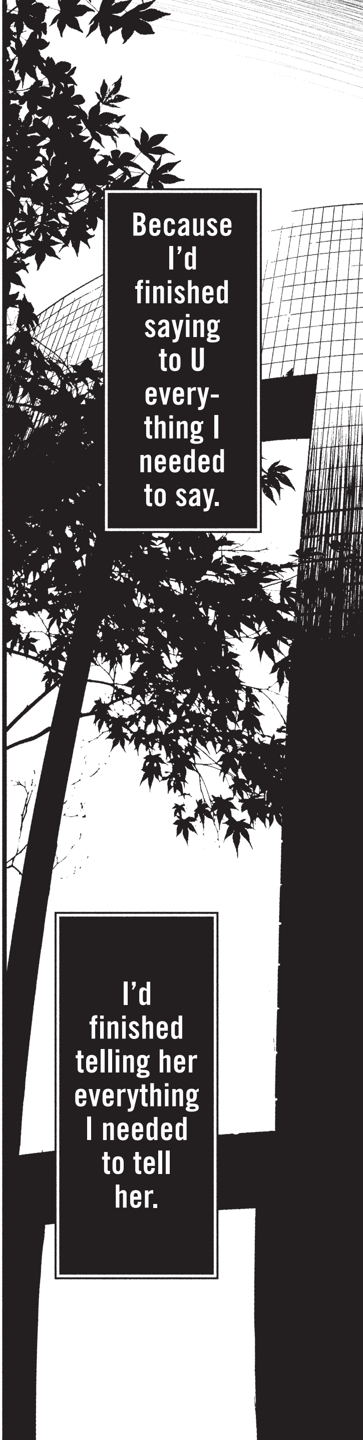



And so,
this incident came to an end.

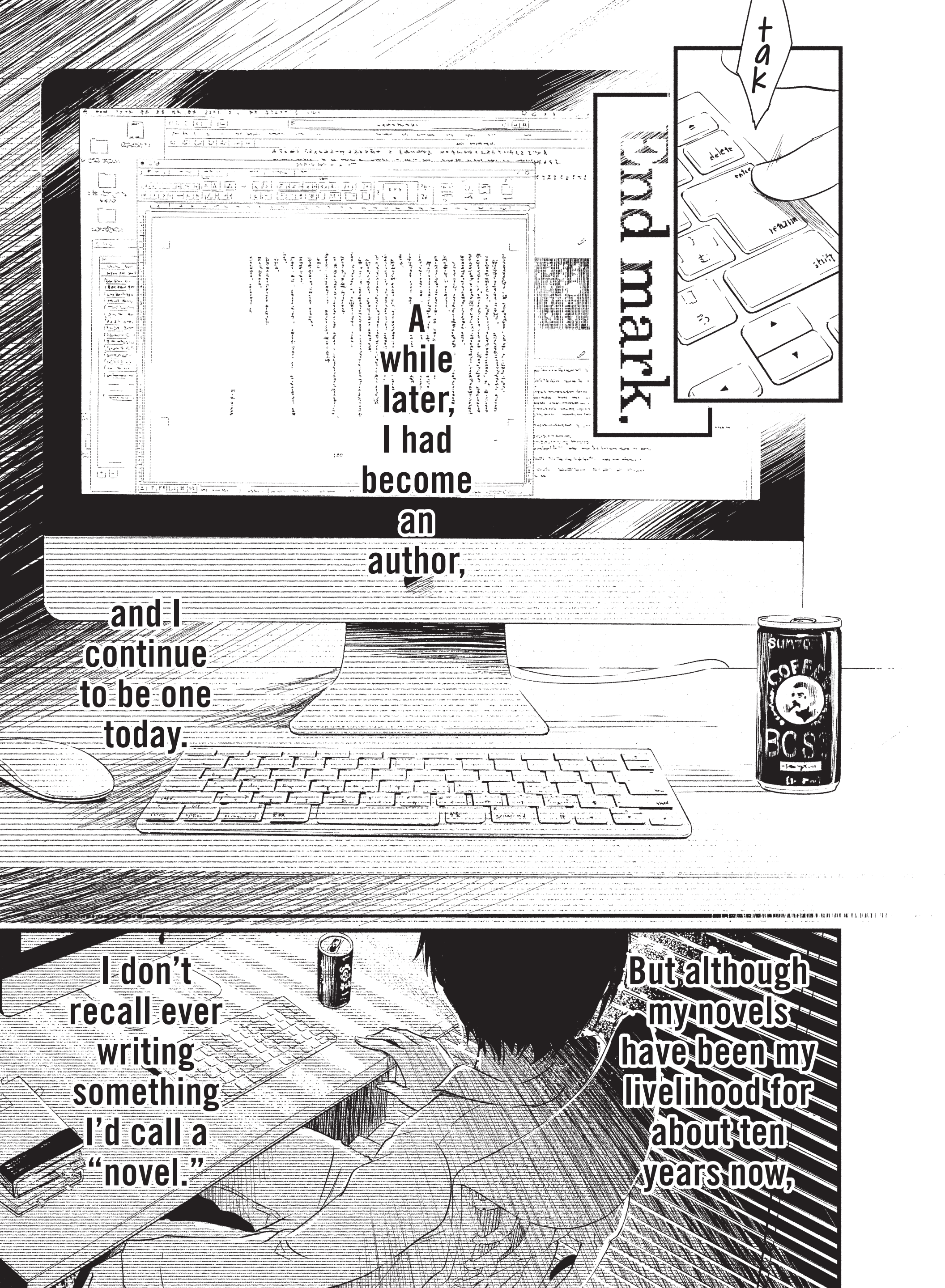

Y O T O
OLICE
ding dong
O
LIC
I'm not sure if I should say, "at last,"
or if I should say, "finally."

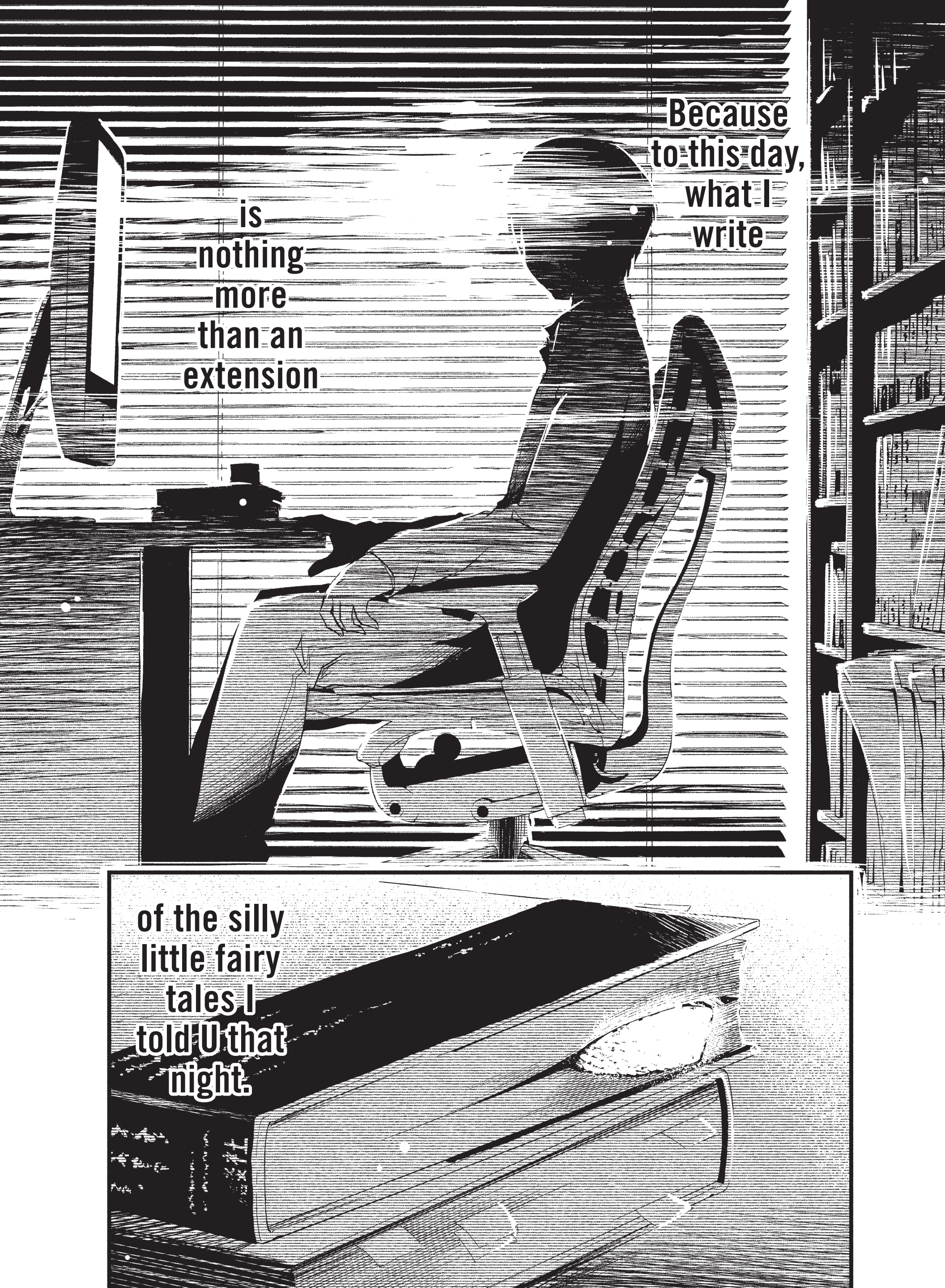

I never looked into it properly, so I can’t say for sure,
but apparently U’s actions outside the home seemed odd and suspicious in some way,
and so someone talked to the police about it.
OLICE
CE

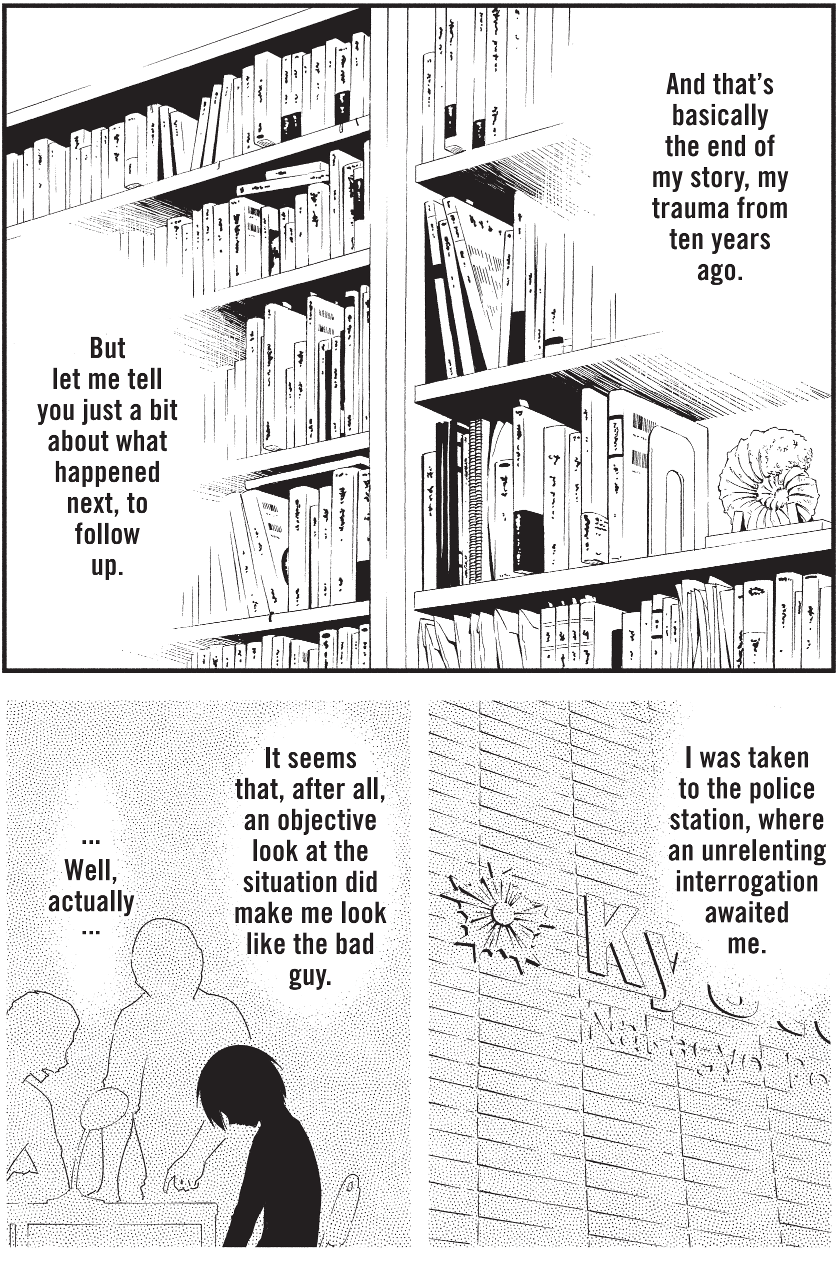

I never got to hear her say good-bye
or tell her the same.
This dramatic little imprisonment had already failed at some point along the line...
From my perspective, maybe I should be saying that I made it out just in time.

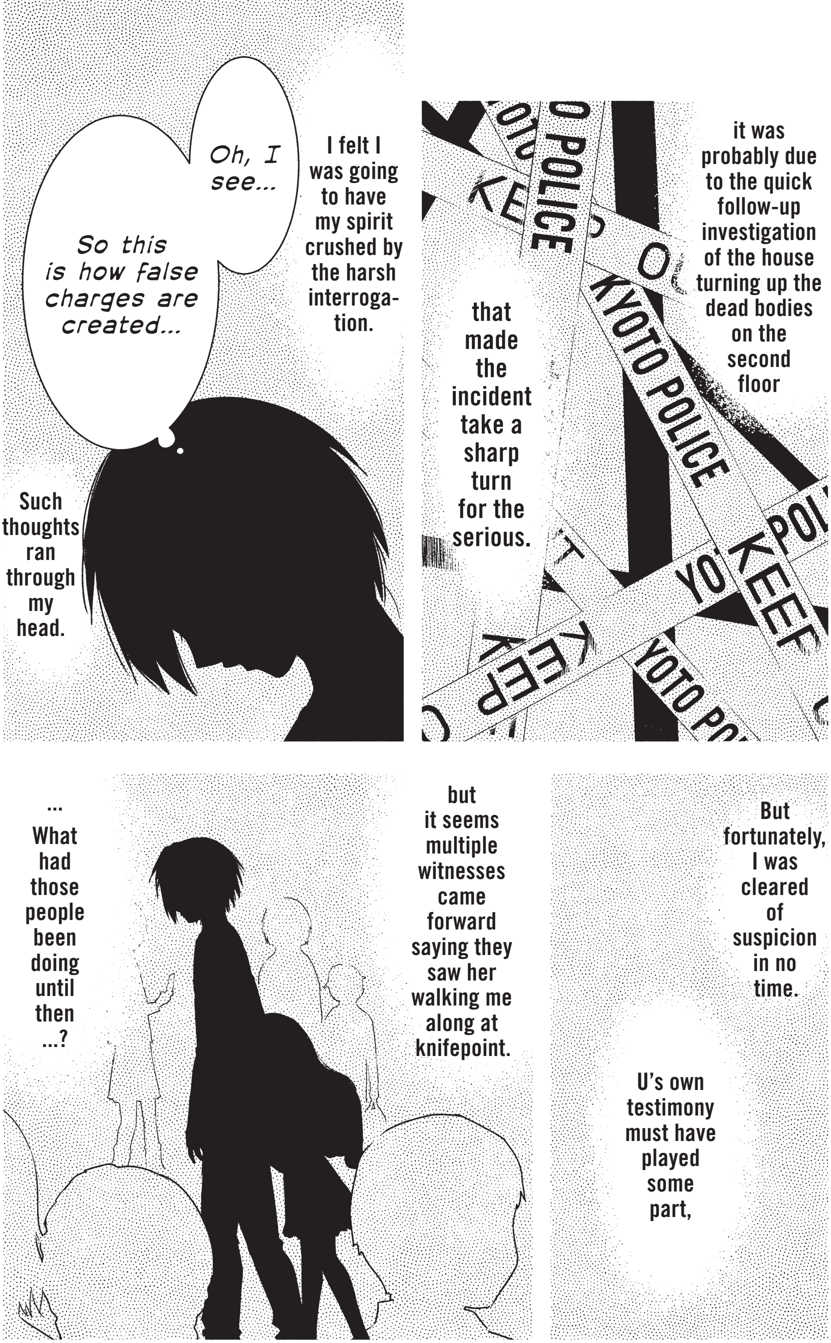

Because I'd finished saying to U everything I needed to say.
I'd finished telling her everything I needed to tell her.

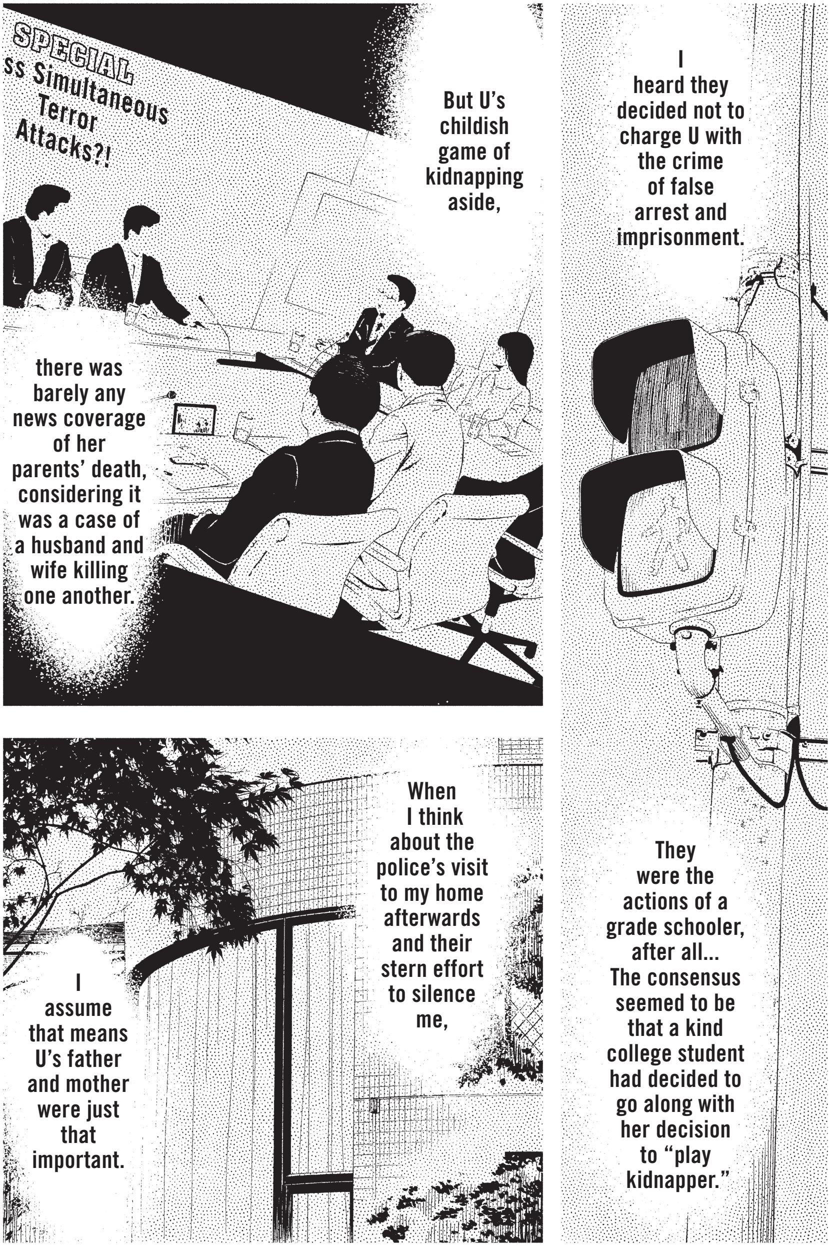
That was the last I ever saw of U.

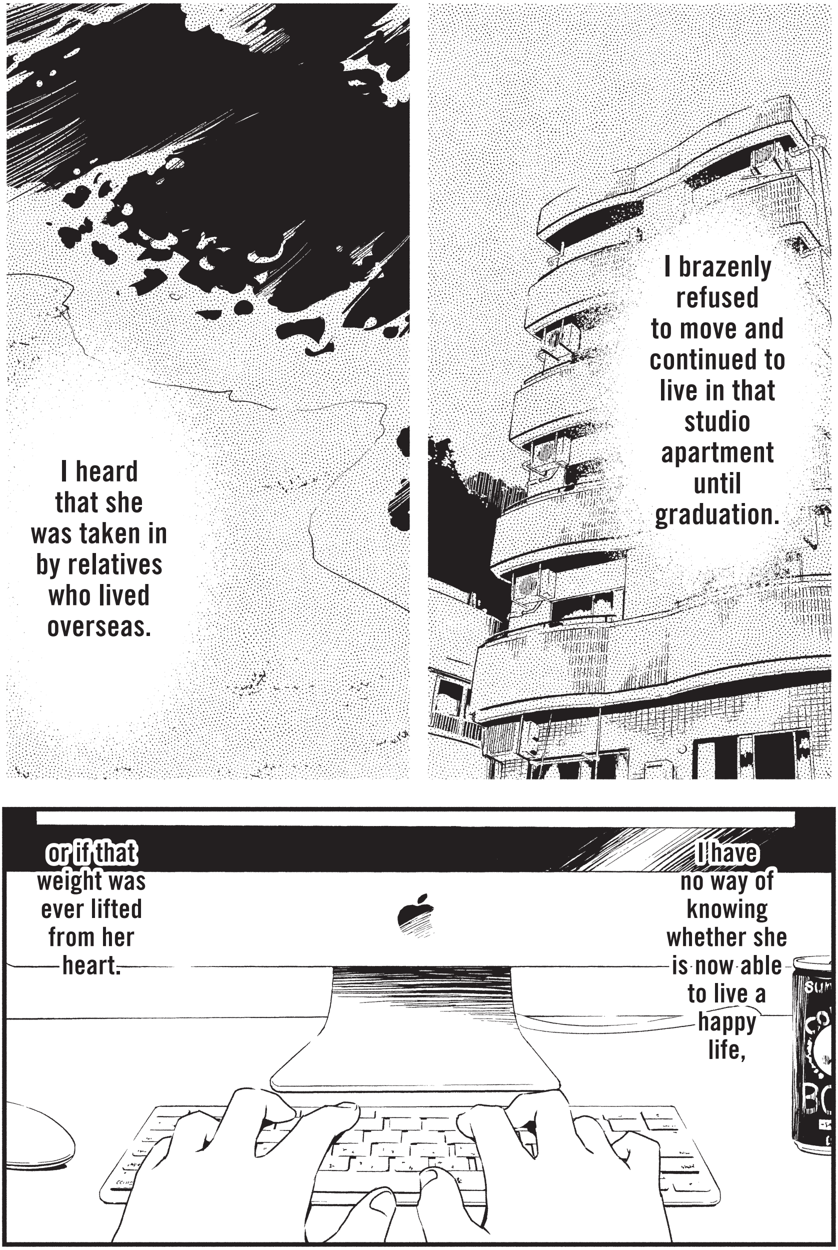

tak
End mark.
A while later, I had become an author,
and I continue to be one today.
But although my novels have been my livelihood for about ten years now,
I don't recall ever writing something I'd call a "novel."

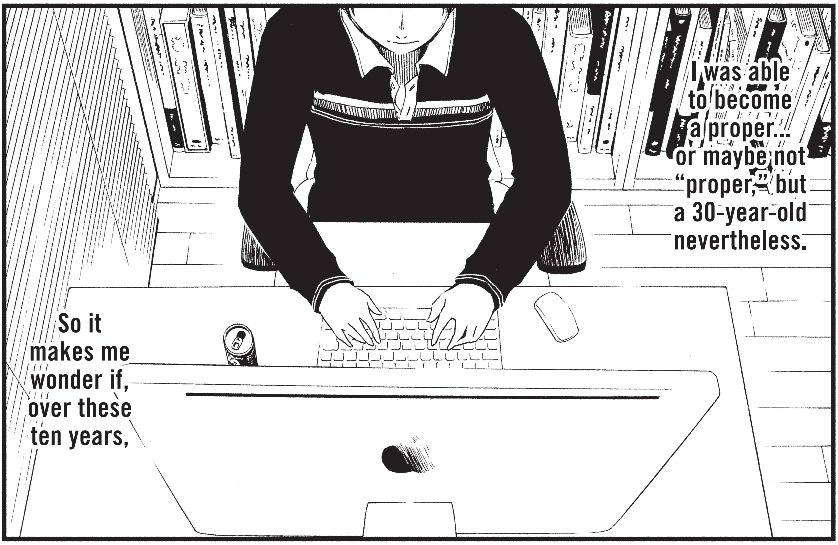

Because to this day, what I write
is nothing more than an extension
of the silly little fairy tales I told U that night.

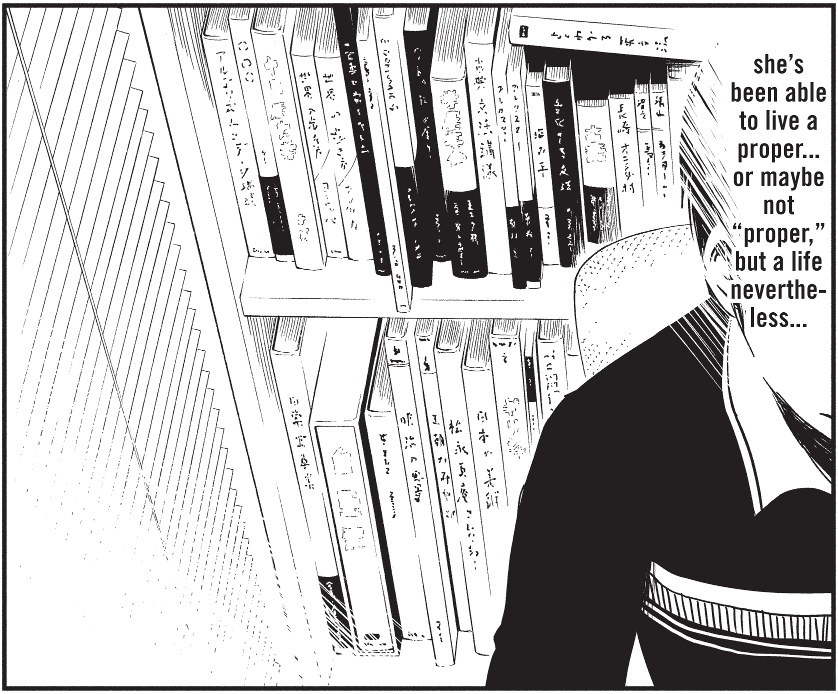

And that's basically the end of my story, my trauma from ten years ago.
But let me tell you just a bit about what happened next, to follow up.
I was taken to the police station, where an unrelenting interrogation awaited me.
It seems that, after all, an objective look at the situation did make me look like the bad guy.
... Well, actually ...


it was probably due to the quick follow-up investigation of the house turning up the dead bodies on the second floor
that made the incident take a sharp turn for the serious.
KYOTO POLICE
KEEP
I felt I was going to have my spirit crushed by the harsh interrogation.
Oh, I see...
So this is how false charges are created...
Such thoughts ran through my head.
But fortunately, I was cleared of suspicion in no time.
U's own testimony must have played some part,
but it seems multiple witnesses came forward saying they saw her walking me along at knifepoint.
... What had those people been doing until then ...?

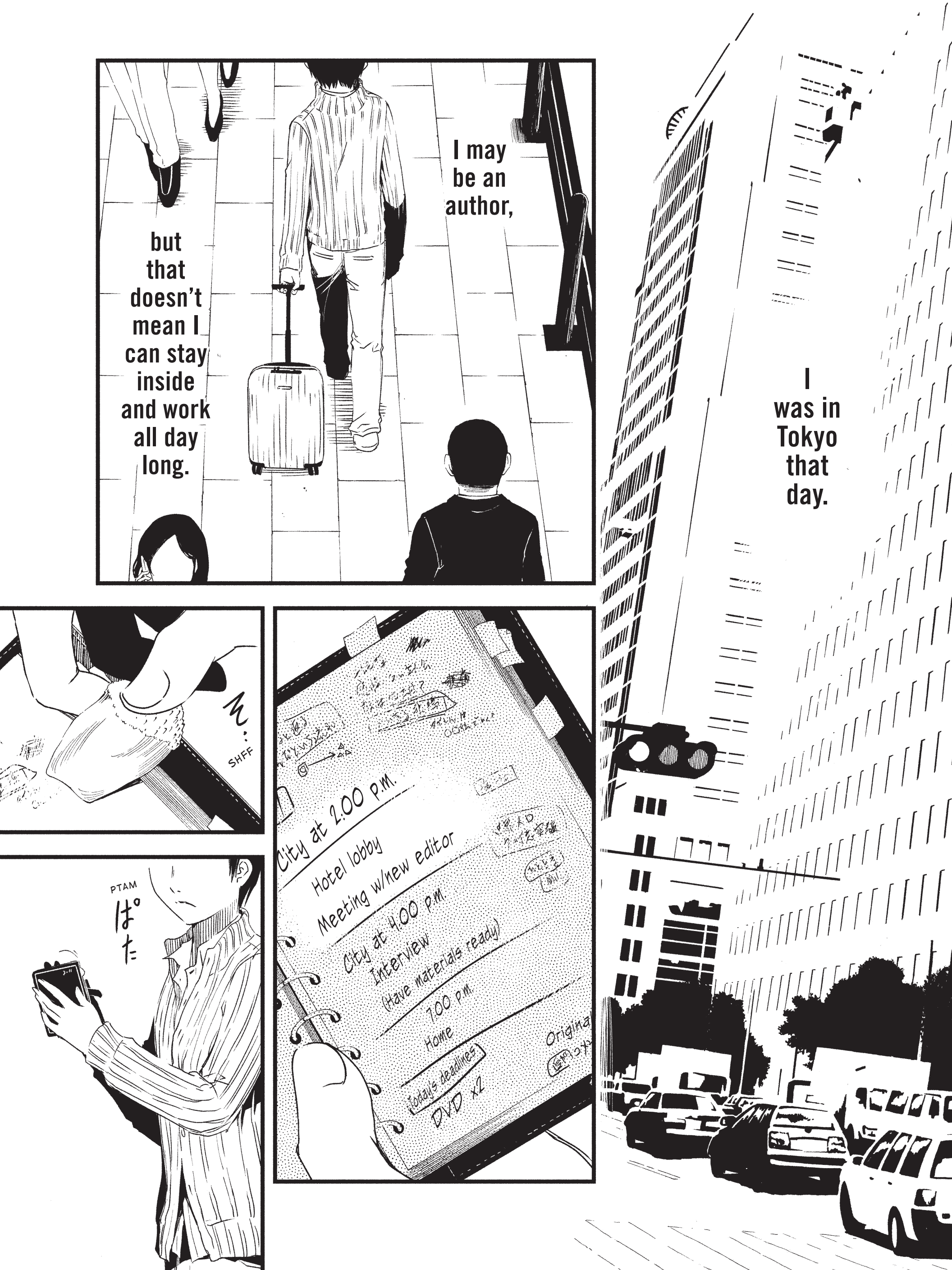

SPECIAL
ss Simultaneous Terror Attacks?!
But U's childish game of kidnapping aside,
there was barely any news coverage of her parents' death, considering it was a case of a husband and wife killing one another.
When I think about the police's visit to my home afterwards and their stern effort to silence me,
I assume that means U's father and mother were just that important.
I heard they decided not to charge U with the crime of false arrest and imprisonment.
They were the actions of a grade schooler, after all... The consensus seemed to be that a kind college student had decided to go along with her decision to "play kidnapper."

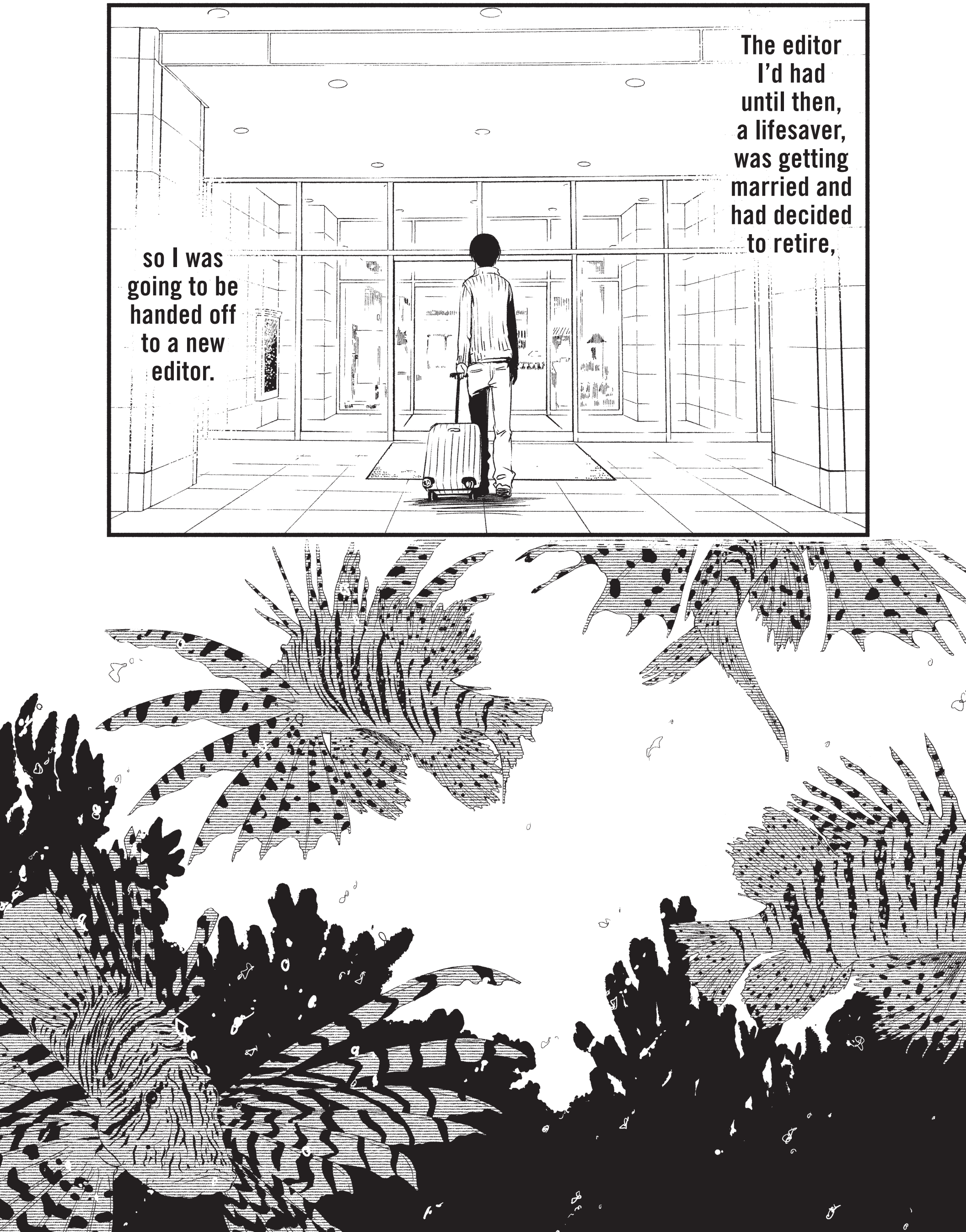

I brazenly refused to move and continued to live in that studio apartment until graduation.
I heard that she was taken in by relatives who lived overseas.
I have no way of knowing whether she is now able to live a happy life,
or if that weight was ever lifted from her heart.

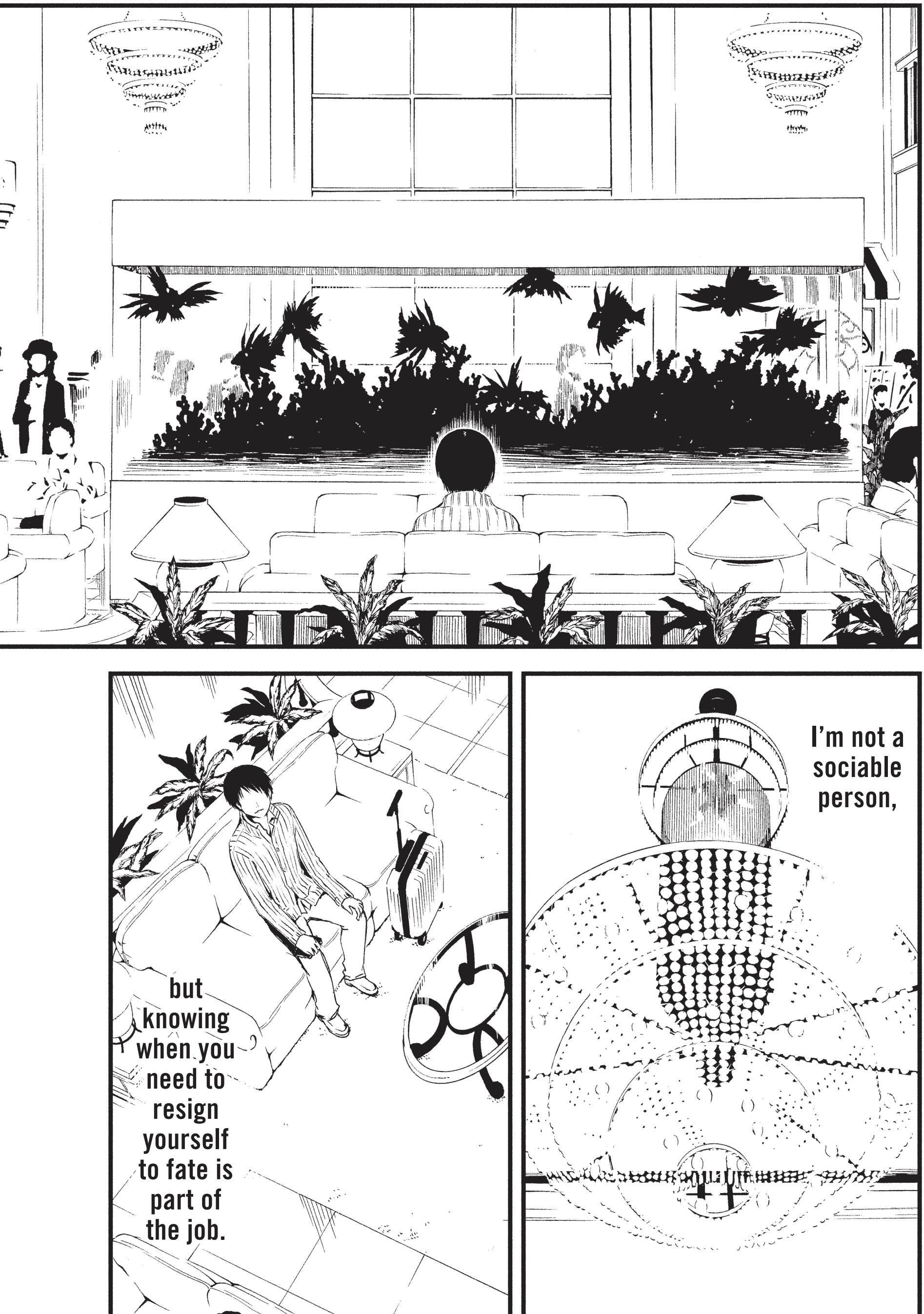

I was able to become a proper... or maybe not "proper," but a 30-year-old nevertheless.
So it makes me wonder if, over these ten years,

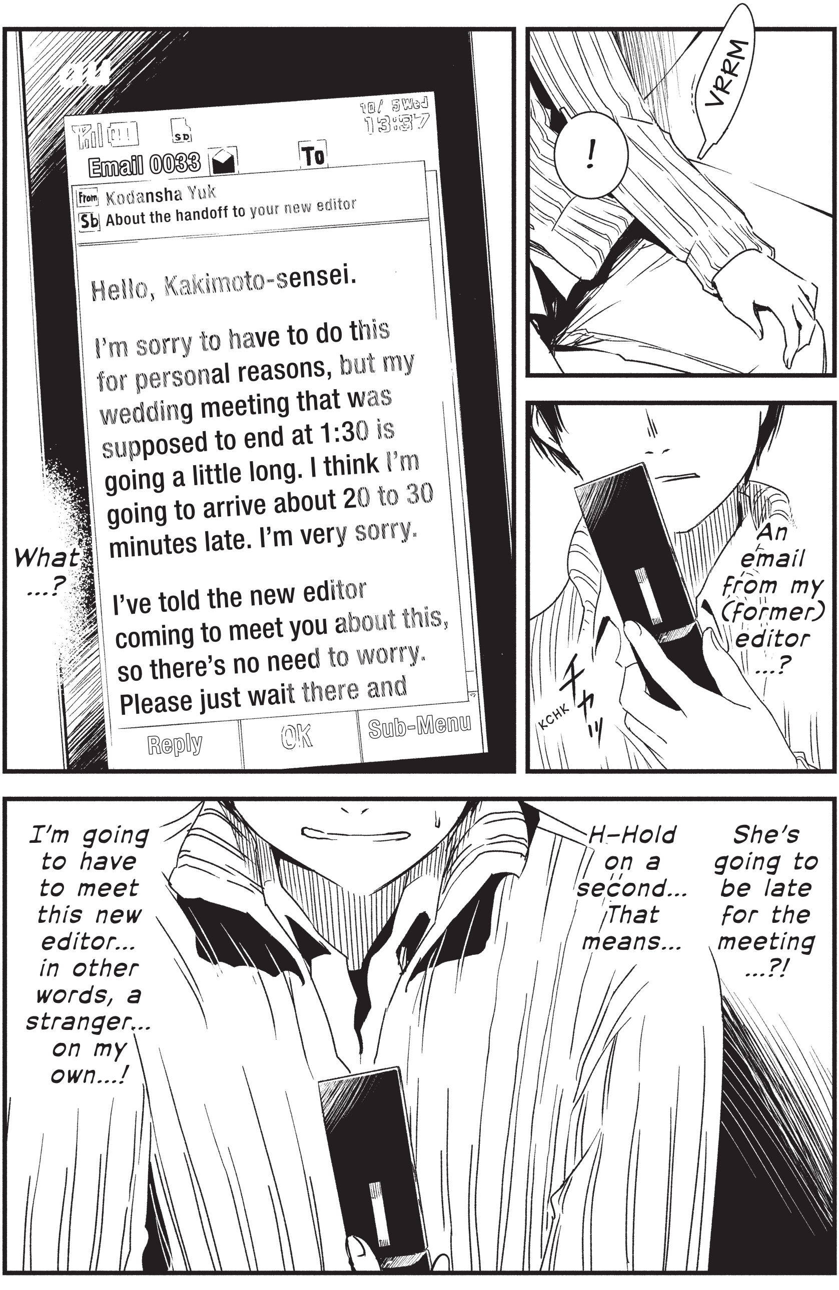

she's been able to live a proper... or maybe not "proper," but a life nevertheless...

27


I was in Tokyo that day.
I may be an author,
but that doesn't mean I can stay inside and work all day long.
SHFF
City at 2.00 p.m.
Hotel lobby
Meeting w/new editor
City at 4.00 p.m.
Interview
(Have materials ready)
7.00 p.m.
Home
Today's deadlines
DVD x2
Original
ぱた
PTAM


The editor I'd had until then, a lifesaver, was getting married and had decided to retire,
so I was going to be handed off to a new editor.


I'm not a sociable person,
but knowing when you need to resign yourself to fate is part of the job.


VRRM
!
An email from my (former) editor ...?
チャッ
KCHK
au
10/ 5Wed
13:37
Email 0033
To

From Kodansha Yuk

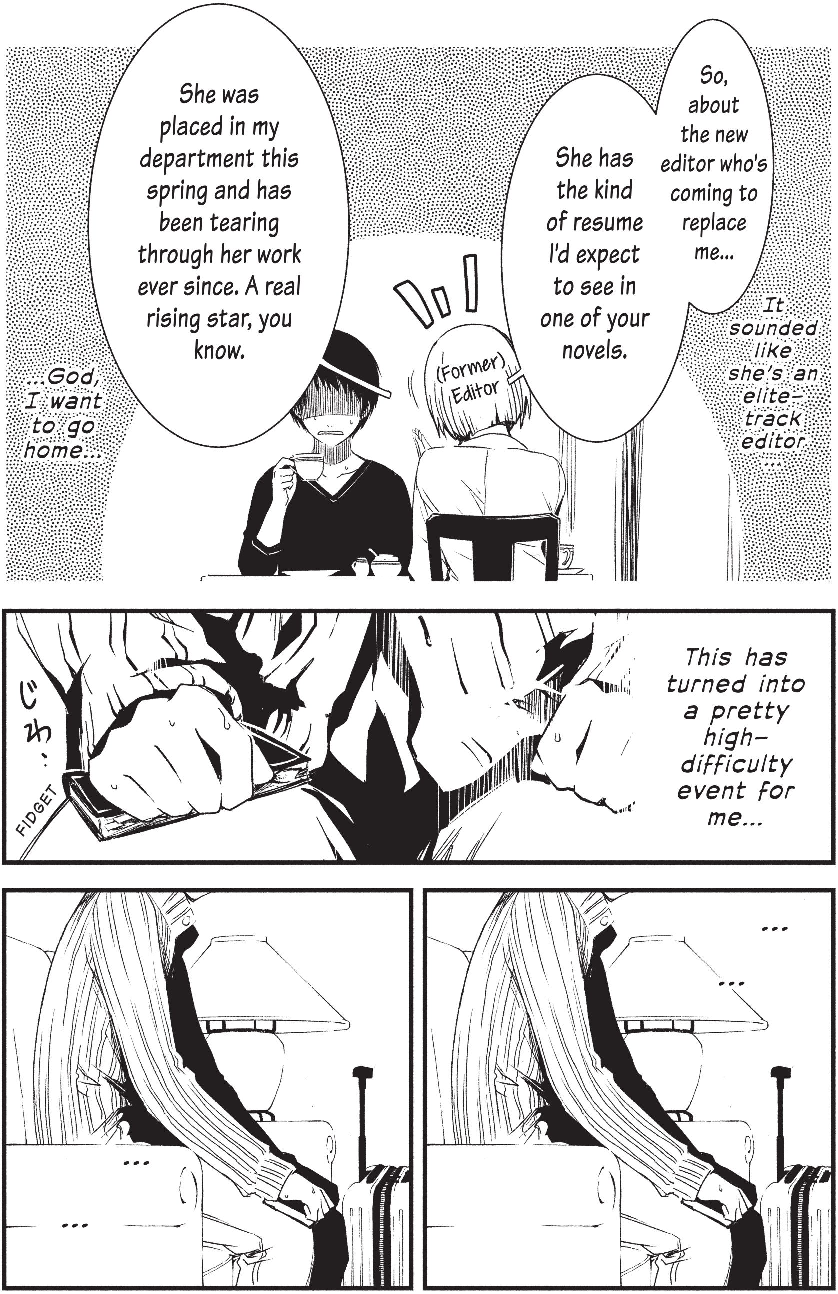
Sb About the handoff to your new editor

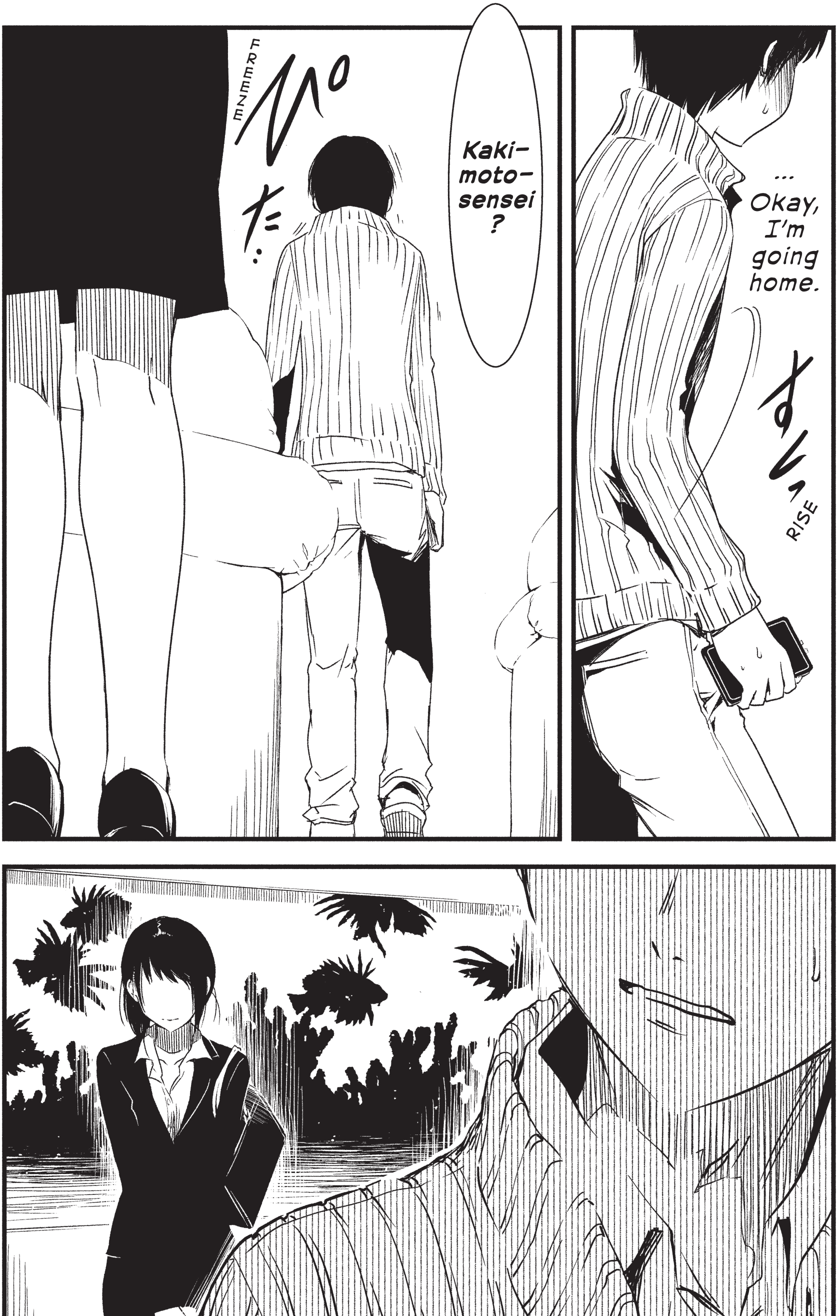
Hello, Kakimoto-sensei.

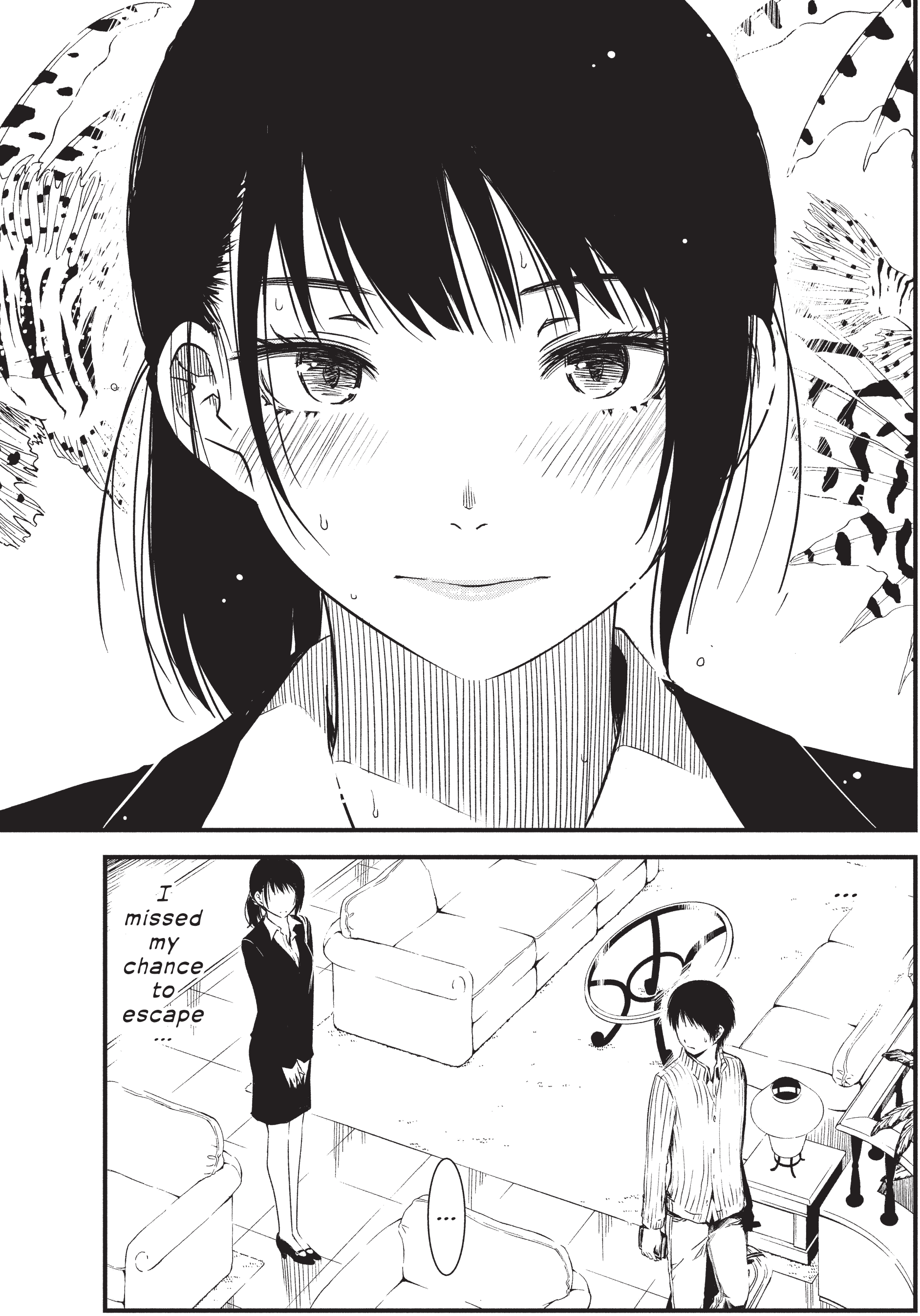
I'm sorry to have to do this for personal reasons, but my wedding meeting that was supposed to end at 1:30 is going a little long. I think I'm going to arrive about 20 to 30 minutes late. I'm very sorry.

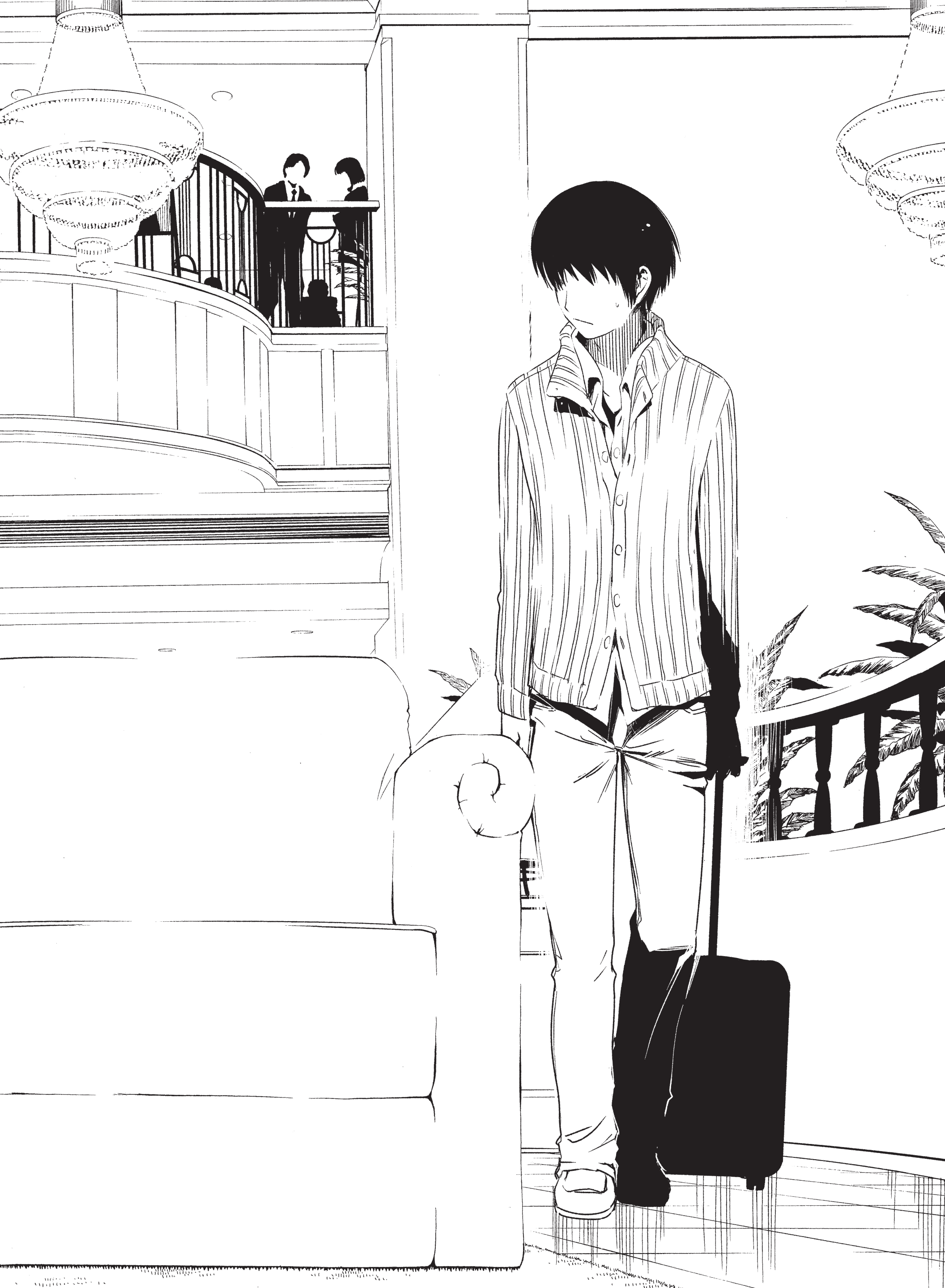
I've told the new editor coming to meet you about this, so there's no need to worry. Please just wait there and

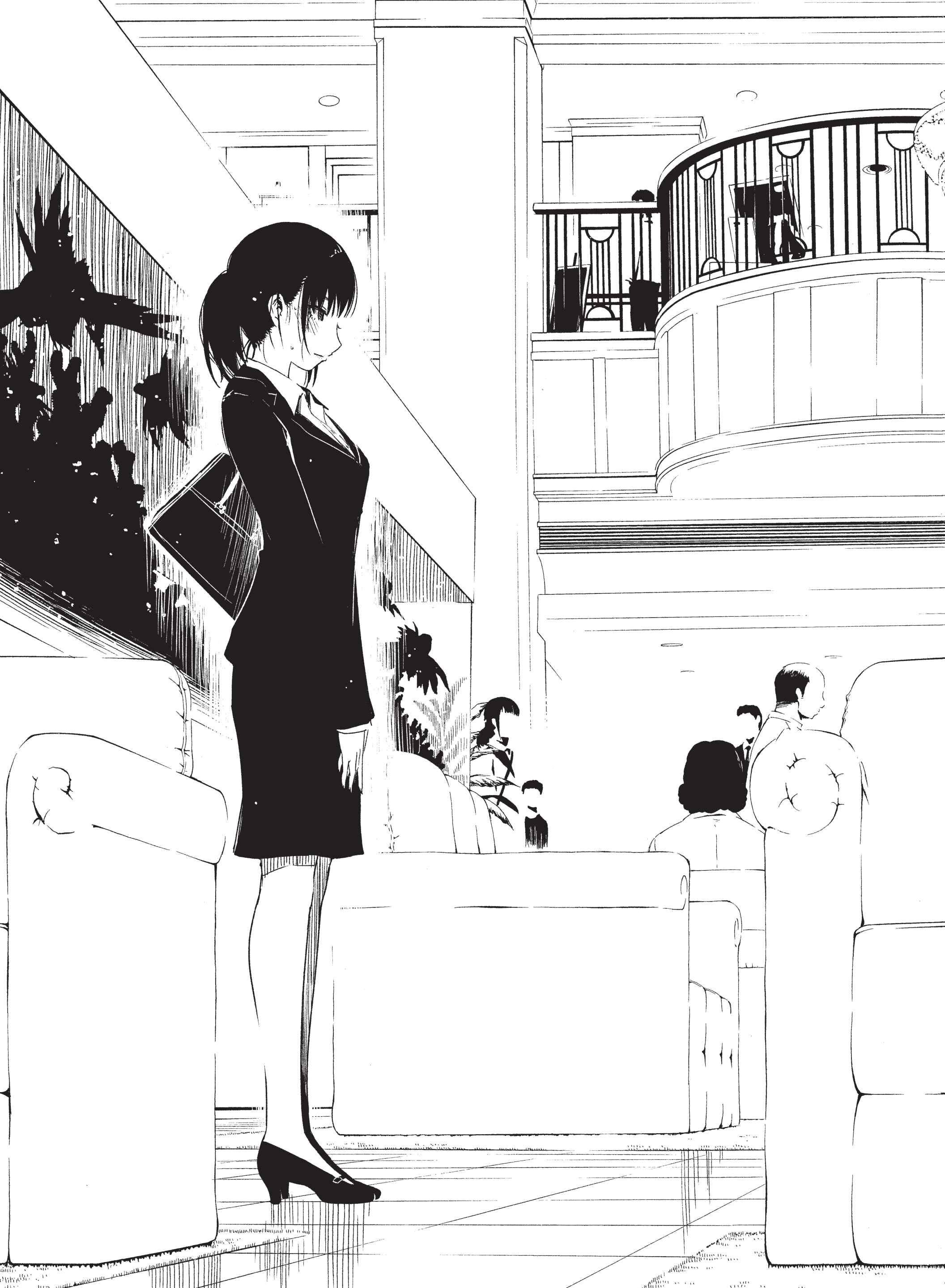
Reply
OK
Sub-Menu
What ...?
She's going to be late for the meeting ...?!
H-Hold on a second... That means...
I'm going to have to meet this new editor... in other words, a stranger... on my own...!

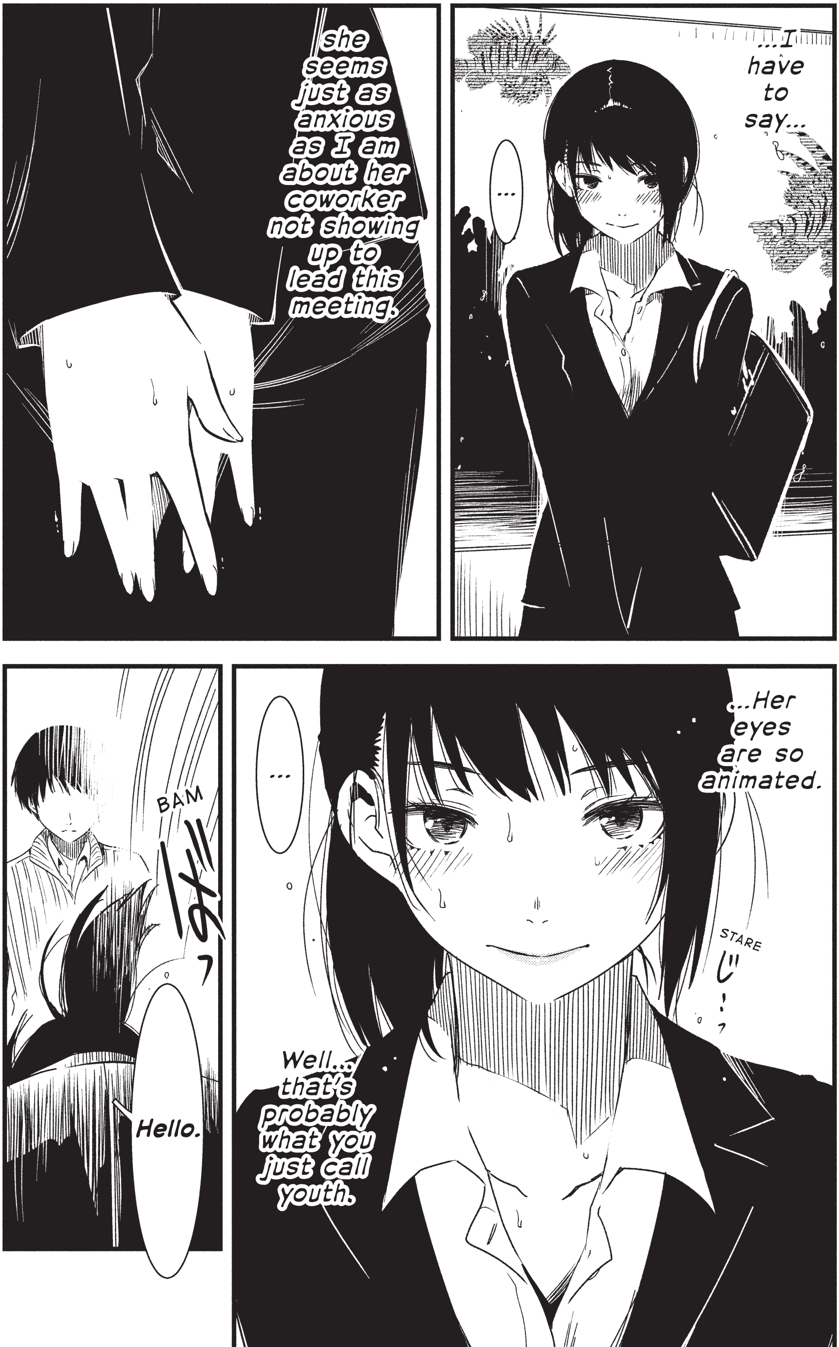

So, about the new editor who's coming to replace me...
She has the kind of resume I'd expect to see in one of your novels.
It sounded like she's an elite-track editor...
She was placed in my department this spring and has been tearing through her work ever since. A real rising star, you know.
(Former) Editor
...God, I want to go home...
This has turned into a pretty high-difficulty event for me...
じわ…
FIDGET
...
...
...
...

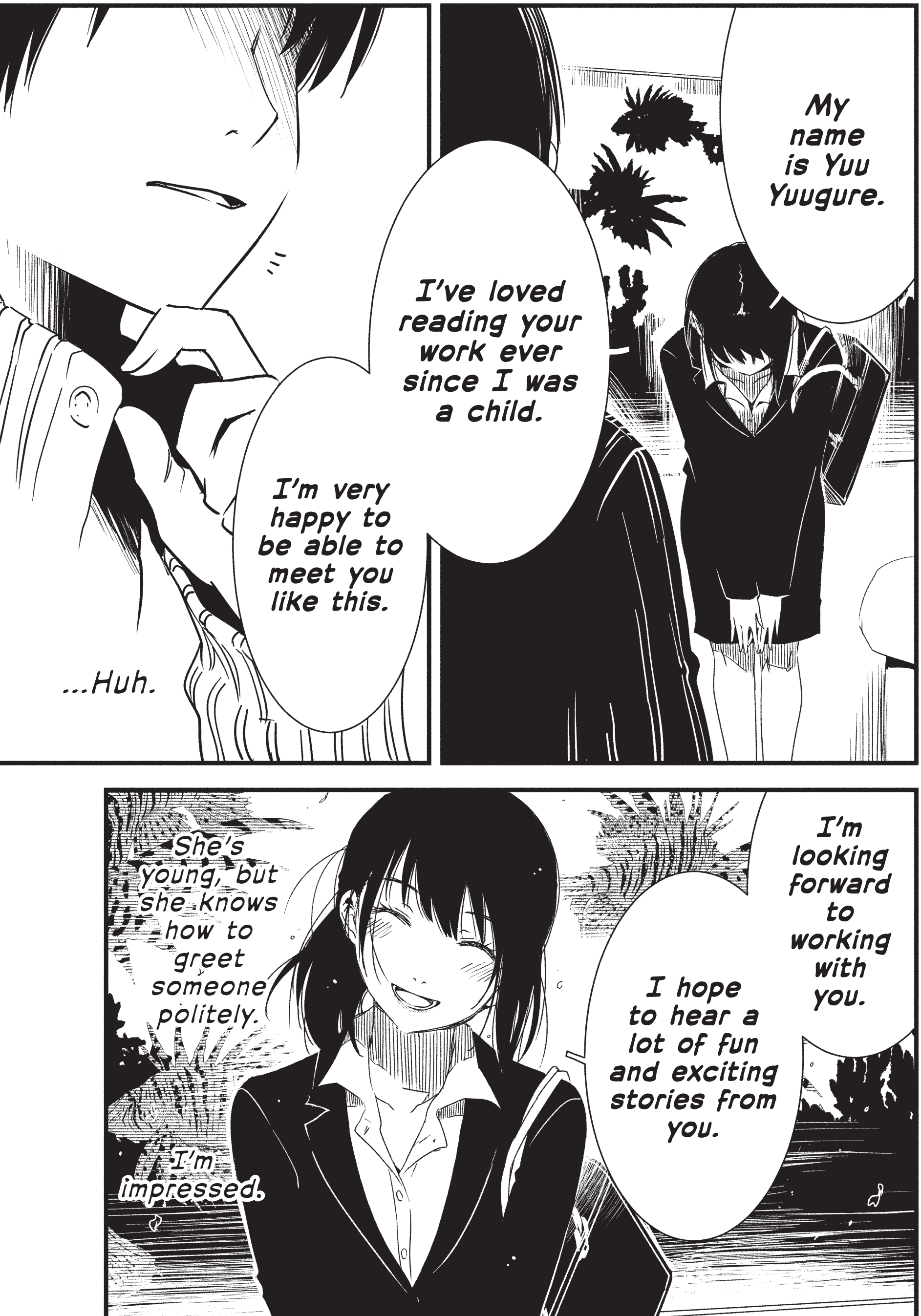

... Okay, I'm going home.
すい
RISE
Kaki-moto-sensei?
ぴた
FREEZE

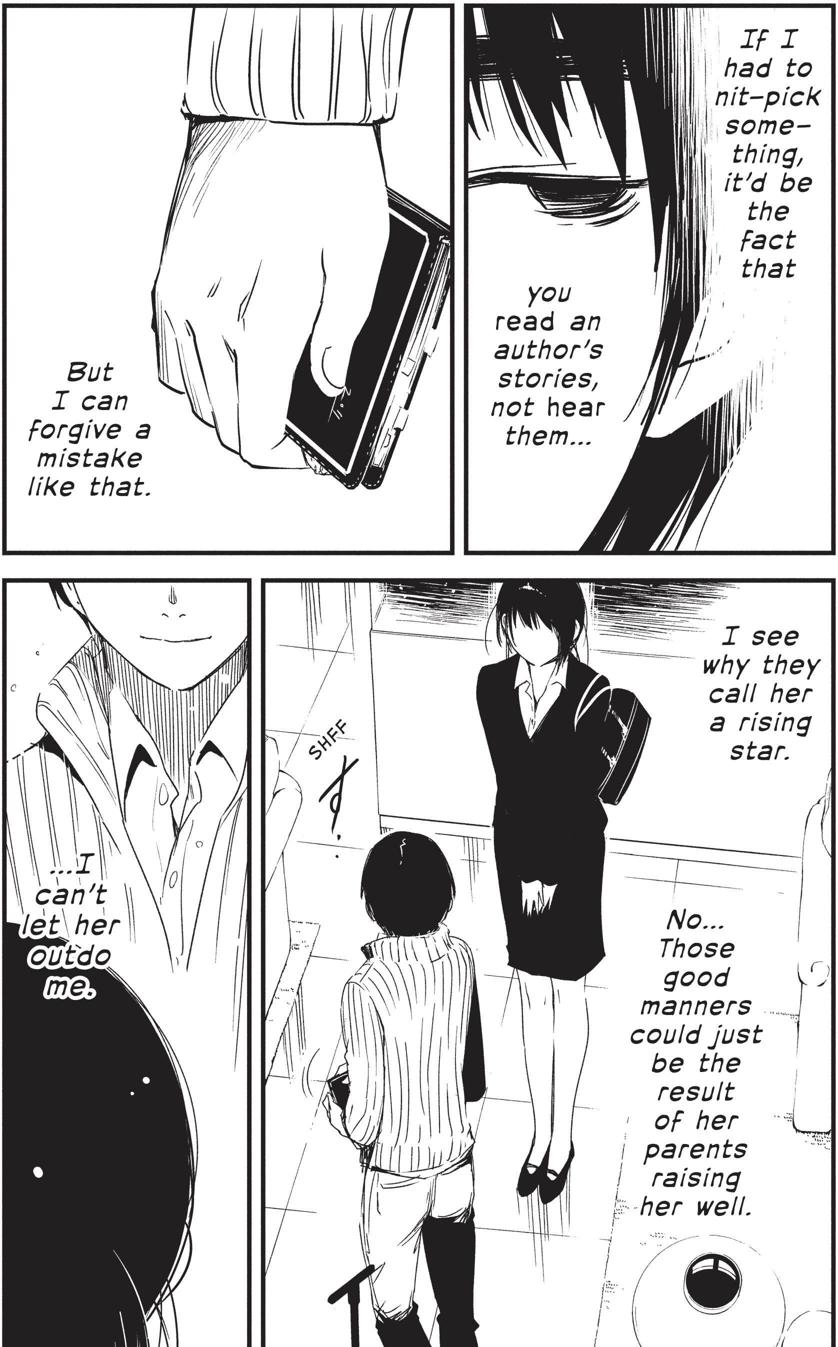

...
I missed my chance to escape ...
...

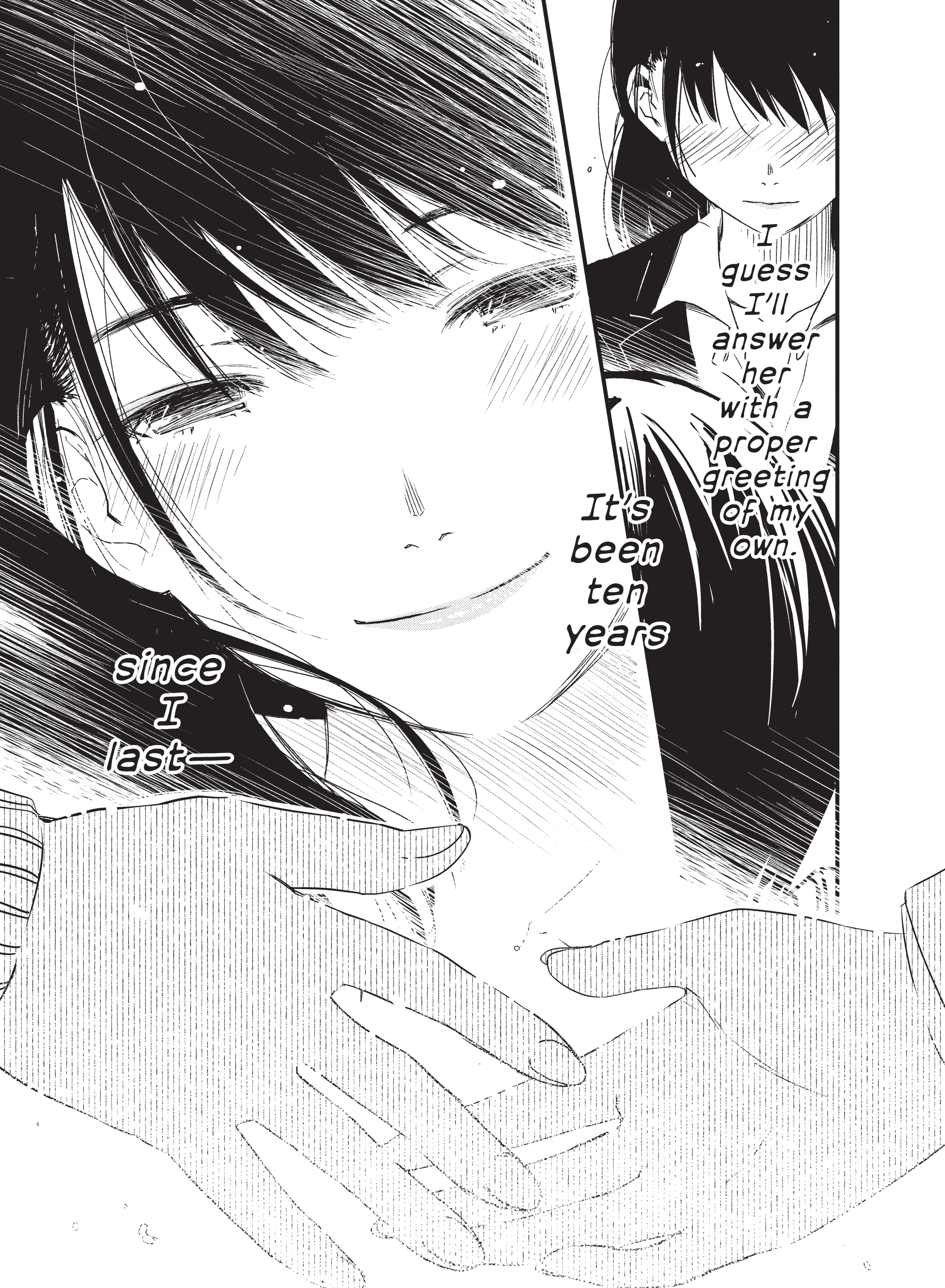


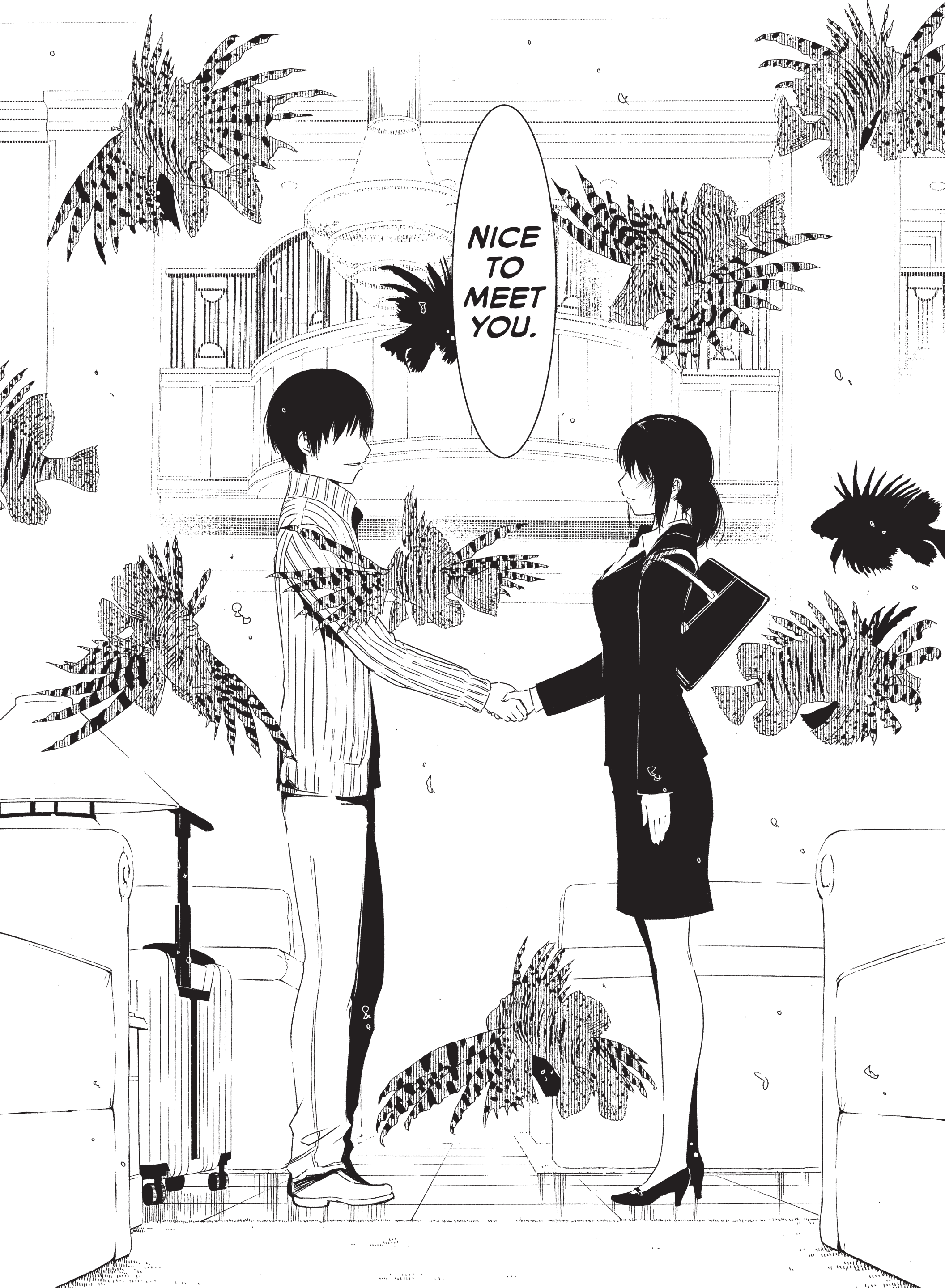



...I have to say...
...
she seems just as anxious as I am about her coworker not showing up to lead this meeting.
...Her eyes are so animated.
...
STARE
じ!っ
Well... that's probably what you just call youth.
BAM
ばっ
Hello.

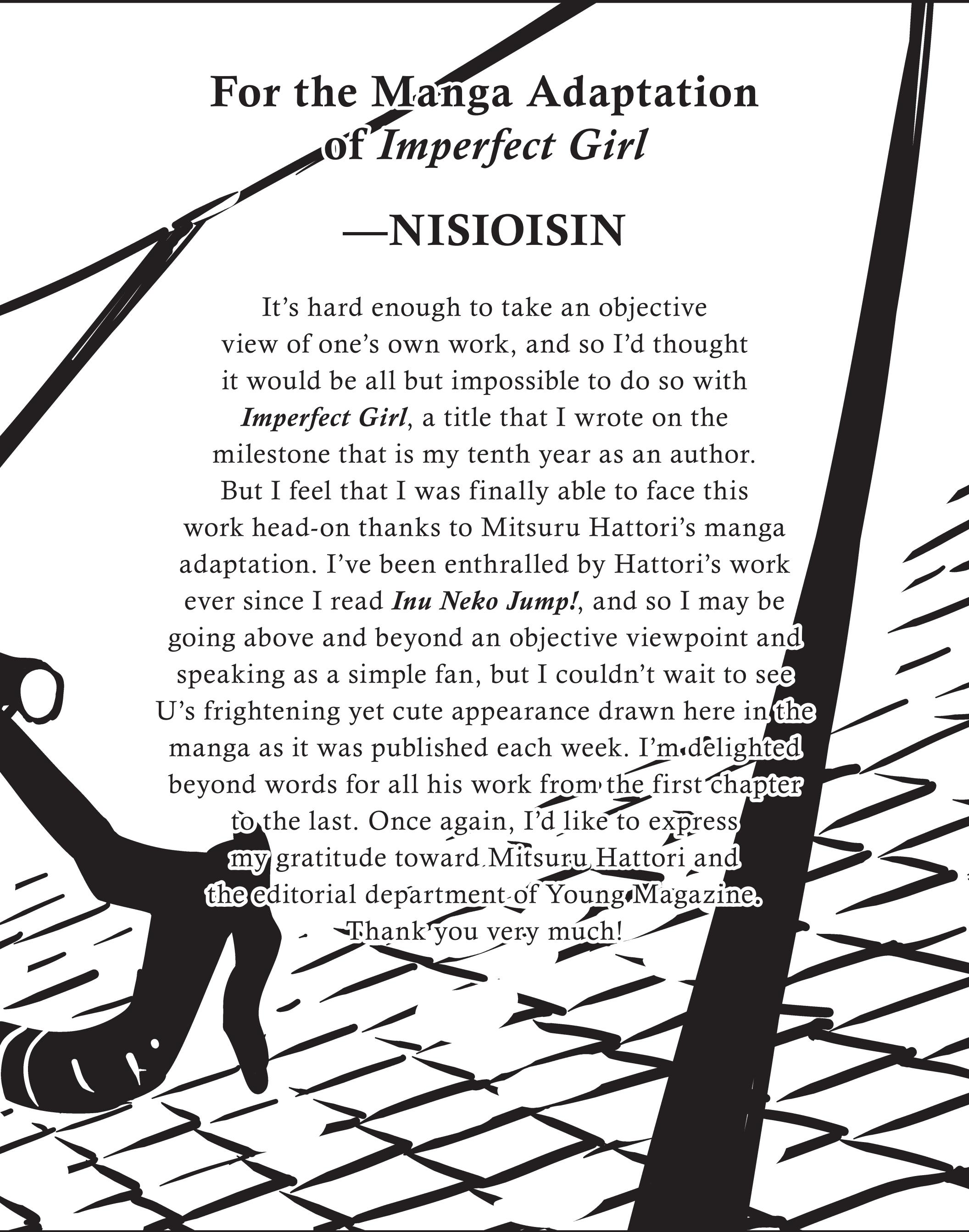

My name is Yuu Yuugure.
I've loved reading your work ever since I was a child.
I'm very happy to be able to meet you like this.
...Huh.
I'm looking forward to working with you.
I hope to hear a lot of fun and exciting stories from you.
She's young, but she knows how to greet someone politely.
I'm impressed.


If I had to nit-pick something, it'd be the fact that
you read an author's stories, not hear them...
But I can forgive a mistake like that.
I see why they call her a rising star.
SHFF
す
No... Those good manners could just be the result of her parents raising her well.
...I can't let her outdo me.


I guess I'll answer her with a proper greeting of my own.
It's been ten years
since I last—


NICE TO MEET YOU.

Imperfect Girl: End



For the Manga Adaptation of *Imperfect Girl*

—NISIOISIN

It's hard enough to take an objective view of one's own work, and so I'd thought it would be all but impossible to do so with ***Imperfect Girl***, a title that I wrote on the milestone that is my tenth year as an author. But I feel that I was finally able to face this work head-on thanks to Mitsuru Hattori's manga adaptation. I've been enthralled by Hattori's work ever since I read ***Inu Neko Jump!***, and so I may be going above and beyond an objective viewpoint and speaking as a simple fan, but I couldn't wait to see U's frightening yet cute appearance drawn here in the manga as it was published each week. I'm delighted beyond words for all his work from the first chapter to the last. Once again, I'd like to express my gratitude toward Mitsuru Hattori and the editorial department of Young Magazine. Thank you very much!

While this was actually my first time drawing a manga based on an original property, I never imagined I would be given so much freedom to do as I wanted. (My storyboards, manuscripts, and final proofs were checked, of course.)

Though I realized how reckless a move it was, after I was mesmerized by NISIOISIN's incredible novel and Foo Midori's cover illustration of U, I made the request myself to create a manga adaptation of ***Imperfect Girl*** and was given the opportunity to do so.

I'm really
not kidding when
I say I had so much
fun over this last year
as I worked that I found
myself wondering if this
was some kind
of reward. I have
nothing but gratitude
for NISIOISIN,
who gave me this
opportunity.

I also hope
that all of the fans
of the original novel,
as well as all of the
readers who started
with this manga
adaptation,
enjoyed reading
this work.

—Mitsuru Hattori

Imperfect Girl 3

KODANSHA COMICS Digital Edition

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